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Drawing as Roadmap

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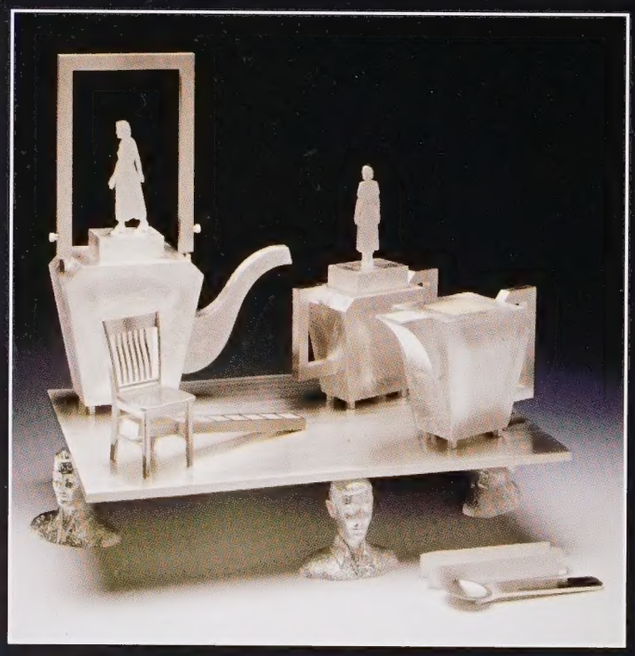

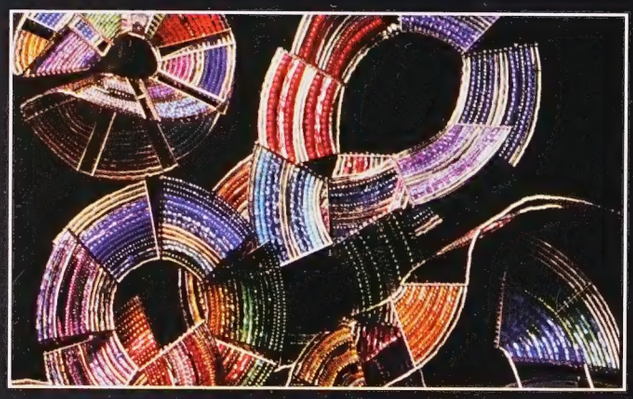

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP-LEFT: CHRISTINA SMITH, TOD PARDON, JENNIFER TRASK, HELEN SHIRK, FLORA BOOK

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FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

While each issue of *Metalsmith* imparts various views on craft, however implicit, this issue makes explicit a current debate in the field. The features on William Frederick and Myra Mimlitsch-Gray in particular, underscore differing notions about the essence of craft and even of humanism. This dispute centers on the importance of the maker's hand and, within holloware, could be dubbed "the hammer mark controversy."

Frederick, at 83, is a direct heir to the Arts and Crafts tradition in Chicago, where he has lived for five decades, surviving solely on his holloware. His work is characterized by strong design and subtly articulated surfaces, which preserve the marks of the planishing hammer. Mimlitsch-Gray, nearly half Frederick's age, has spent the past 20 years teaching in academic settings, in addition to her studio practice. Her specialty is the exaggeration and distortion of traditional holloware properties, including scale, surface, and function.

Polly Ullrich's article on Frederick extols his "aesthetics of humanism" and finds in his hammer marks "a reference to the humanism inherent in objects made by the hand." When he "preserves his planishing hammer marks," she writes, "he builds singularly human characteristics into the work, and signifies an aesthetic based on the qualities of intimacy, accessibility, and sensory experience."

This same mark of the hammer or hand becomes problematic within Mimlitsch-Gray's work. According to the artist, her "Hammermark" series, with its huge indentations, was a "magnification technique, based on romantic propaganda that exposes the flaws of handwork as a mark of its handcrafted significance." Author David McFadden similarly sees her work as revealing the dubious assumptions of the Arts and Crafts movement, wherein the "mark of the hand" was thought to distinguish these objects from the "emotionless and inhuman perfection of industrial products." Indeed, the question of perfection is closely linked to any discussion of handmade virtues.

But while to err is human, so too is the quest for perfection, a quality both artists openly pursue. So we must ultimately ask: Where exactly does the human reside in a craft object? What is the stylistic signifier of humanity? Is it found in the irregularities of the hand or in the sublime precision of perfect form? Is the maker most evident in the material execution or in the ideal design? One thing is clear, any satisfying definition of craft, or of humanism, must somehow embrace all these facets.

SR

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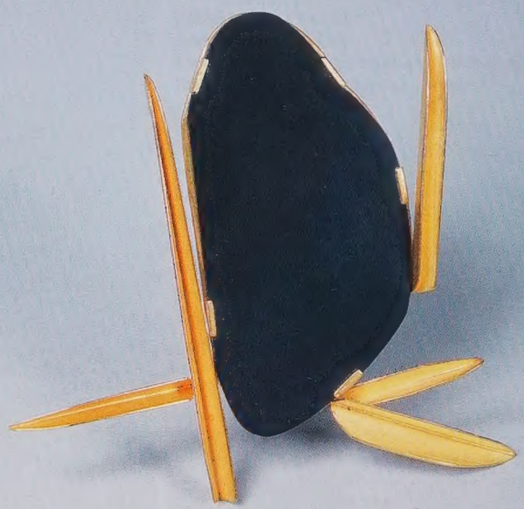

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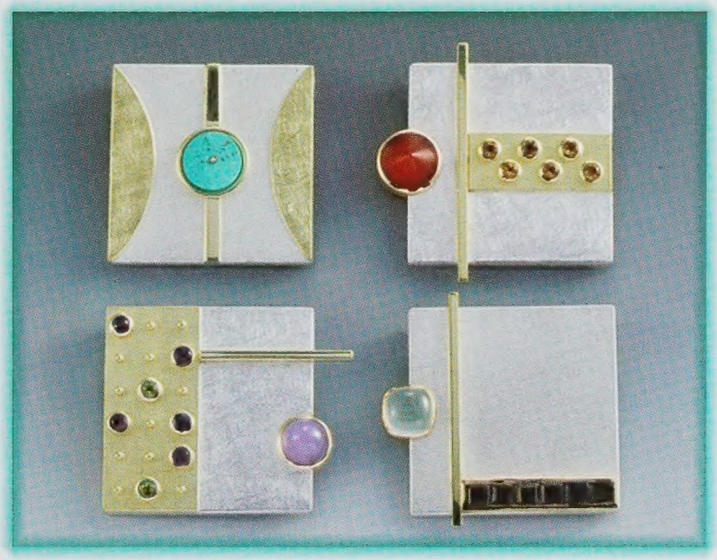

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Wall Piece I, 2002. 450cm² x 90cm. Detail
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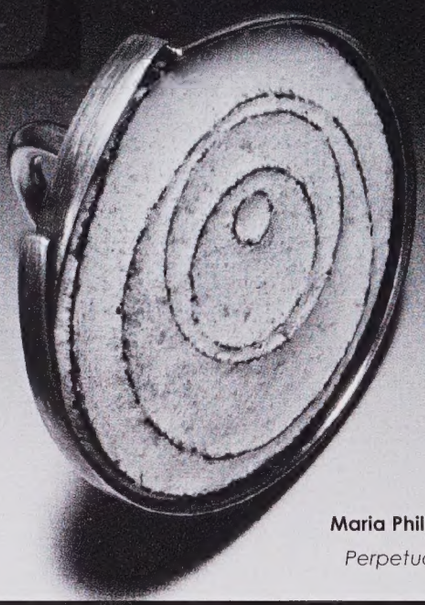

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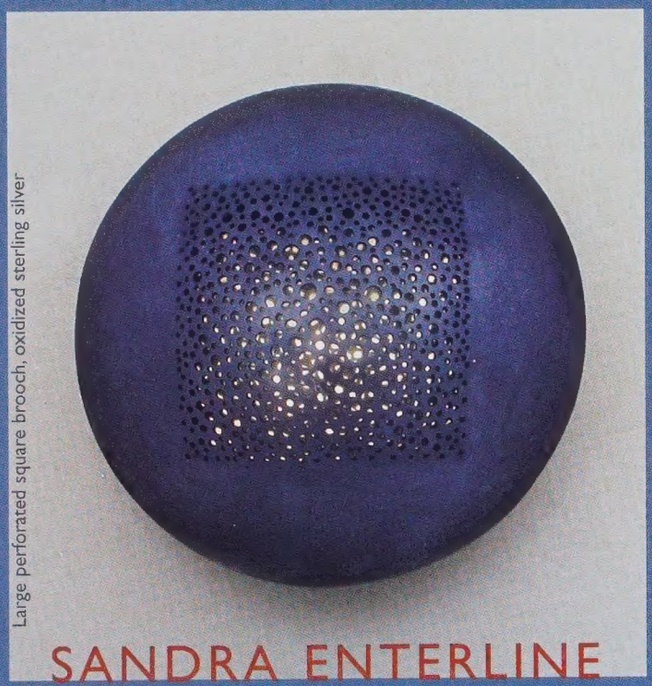

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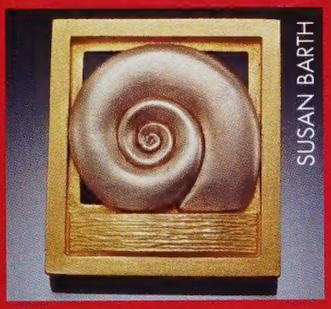

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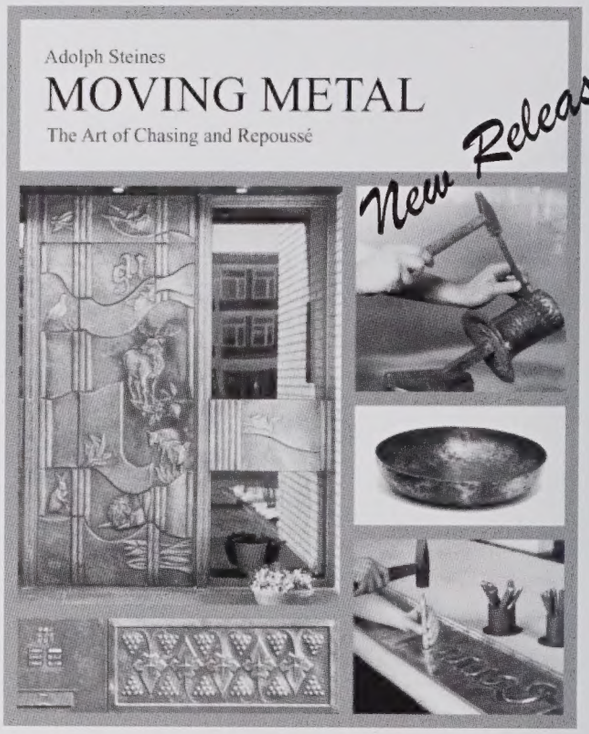

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Peter Egli, Roger Fayet, Florian Hufnagl, Christof Kübler, Ellen Maurer-Zilioli, Sibylle Omlin

Arnoldsche Art Publishers, Stuttgart, Germany, 2003

by Ursula Ilse Neuman

Bernhard Schobinger, one of Europe's most provocative and influential jewelry artists, is the subject of this handsome monograph, originally produced for the first major retrospective of his work at the Museum Bellerive in Zurich, Switzerland. Replete with striking images by photographer and video artist Annelies Strba, Schobinger's wife for more than 30 years, the volume is sure to please readers who have seen the works in person as well as those new to his oeuvre.

Seven well-known German and Swiss jewelry experts provide perceptive, albeit short, essays covering the artist's nearly forty-year career, focusing on his philosophy and working process rather than on specific pieces. Three sections of the catalogue are devoted to images of Schobinger's jewelry. The legends for these images offer discerning commentary, forcing the reader to comb through the texts for gem-like insights in much the same way the artist finds his raw materials.

Born in Zurich in 1946, Schobinger lives and works on its lake shore, in Richterswil, opposite the glitter and glamour of the lake's "Gold Coast." This location is a fitting metaphor for the way in which the artist has distanced himself from "traditional preciousness" in his jewelry, shunning status symbols in favor of pungent social criticism. After a traditional education at Zurich's Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Art, Craft and Design) and a four-year apprenticeship with a leading jewelry manufacturer, Schobinger set up his own workshop and gallery in 1968 and soon began to express his unique ideas.

Schobinger's raw materials are the worn-out and discarded detritus of a wasteful consumer society: bottlenecks, saw blades, screws and nails, clothespins, and a host of other cast-offs. The lead essay by Roger Fayet sets the tone for the book by giving us a glimpse into Schobinger's studio, the workshop where he imbues these worthless articles of refuse with "a different richness."

Florian Hufnagl, current director of the Munich Pinakothek der Moderne, describes Schobinger's balancing act between beauty and anti-aesthetic and between reality and surreality. Hufnagl examines the artist's formative years, including his admiration for Max Bill, the Swiss architect, artist, writer, and Bauhaus disciple who advocated an objective, abstract art closely

linked to mathematical theory.

Sibylle Omlin's essay focuses on Annelies Štrba's photographic portraits of Schobinger's jewelry, placing her creativity on par with his. The result is a bit unfair to both artists and develops a tension between the two that is not always successfully resolved, particularly in light of the fact that many of Štrba's photographs are evocative rather than informative and actually detract from an appreciation of the jewelry itself. The couple's daughters play a prominent role as models and Omlin's essay also discusses these family relationships.

lightning rods with gilded copper parts. The rods soon appeared in a ceremonial necklace. Schobinger notes, "An old lightning rod is partially a device to ward off evil, pointing back into a mythical, animistic world." With a lesser talent, these compositions would be little more than shocking one-liners, but Schobinger's fascination with the symbolism and history of an object, as well as its formal properties, infuses his discoveries with poignant beauty, meaning, and value.

For anyone who wants to take a break from convention and get into the mind of a remarkably

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Armreif // 2000 // Transparenter synthetischer Gummi, Keshiperlen, Fischchen Sammlung Annelies Štrba, Schweiz Bangle // 2000 // transparent synthetic rubber, Keshi pearls, little fish Annelies Štrba Collection, Switzerland
Diese Arbeit ist während meines Lehrauftrags an der Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, USA, entstanden. Einer der Studenten arbeitete mit einer Art Gießharz, das mir bislang nicht bekannt war. Was mir an dieser Substanz im Gegensatz zu Acryliglas gefiel, war ihre Wärme, ihre Weichheit und die farbliche Übereinstimmung mit Olivenöl. Als Gussformen für den Kreisring dienten zwei verschieden große Blechbüchsen von Fischkonserven. Die Struktur des Blechs hat sich auf die Oberfläche des Reifs übertragen. This work came into being while I was teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, USA. One of my students was working with a kind of liquid resin hitherto unknown to me. What I liked about this substance, unlike acrylic glass, was its warmth, its ductility and its similarity in colour to olive oil. Two tin cans of different sizes which once contained fish made the moulds for casting the hoop bangle. The texture of the tin has been transferred to the surface of the bangle.
Don't Touch // Armspange // 2000 // Fingerfragment einer Schaufensterpuppe, Messing hartvergoldet, Tahitiperle Don't Touch // bangle // 2000 // fragment of a shop-window mannequin's finger, brass, electroplated gold, Tahiti pearl
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Steinkreis-Kette // 2002 // Achate, Turmaline, Granate, diverse Quarze, Korallen, Lapislazuli, Gold 750 Stone Circle Chain // 2002 // agate, tourmalines, garnets, various quartzes, coral, lapis lazuli, 750 gold
Mädchen mit Kaugummi // Nadel // 2002 // Japanische Elfenbeinschnitzerei, Elfenbein, schottische Flussperle, Gold, Email, Kobalt Sammlung Hiko Mizuno College of Jewelry, Tokio, Japan Girl with Bubble Gum // pin // 2002 // Japanese ivory carving, ivory, Scottish freshwater pearl, gold, enamel, cobaltite Hiko Mizuno College of Jewelry collection, Tokyo, Japan
Mädchen mit Kaugummi // Nadel // 2002 // in japanischer Lackschachtel Girl with Bubble Gum // pin // 2002 // in Japanese lacquer box

The political and social context in which Schobinger developed is vital to his work and is well presented in Christof Kübler's essay, which traces the artist's interest in the rebellious youth movements of the late 1960s and the anarchy of Punk and other popular music. The artist's development during the 1970s and 1980s, when he made his jewelry a "seismograph of the state of society," is linked to his disillusionment with industrial growth and environmental degradation. Such notorious pieces as *Bottlenecklace* (1988), made from broken-off bottlenecks, and *Saw Ring* (1989), which features an iron saw blade, retain their menacing potency and daring.

Personal anecdotes enliven this volume and provide a better understanding of the works. Schobinger describes, for example, how he sneaked onto the roof of a house about to be demolished to snatch two old

sympathetic rebel, *Jewels Now!* offers a welcome diversion. Whether read in German or in polished English translation, this book is thought-provoking, unsettling, and ultimately a triumph. ✖

Ursula Ilse Neuman is curator at the Museum of Arts & Design, New York.

Edible Jewelry

by Sarah Tanguy

Food and fashion—this unlikely pairing turns out to be a growing cultural trend. The French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier mounted a bread show last year, that included bread dresses and accessories, and the October 2004 issue of *Gourmet* featured an advertising spread with a prosciutto teakettle and a cheese ottoman. So what's going on?

clockwise from above
Maru Almeida
Crystalline (rings), 2002
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Shelby Ferris Fitzpatrick
Edible/Sociable Rings, 2001
silver, gold plate, dried food
dimensions variable
Photo: Mike Bissett

Kristi Zevenbergen
Spice Cabinet, 2004
fine silver, glass vials, spices
Photo: Doug Yaple

Food and art have enjoyed a long tradition. Funereal Egyptian paintings and Greco-Roman mosaics linked religion and social status to notions of abundance and nourishment. During the early Christian era, food increasingly assumed a symbolic function, with bread becoming a stand-in for Jesus. Depictions of food gained new prominence with the advent of the still life tradition in seventeenth-century Europe and its added role of *memento mori*. It wasn't until the twentieth century, however, that artists, in their quest to break down the barriers between art and life and high and low art, began making work that incorporated real food.

These inspirations have guided several contemporary jewelers who are interested in exploring unconventional materials and developing a non-traditional definition of value—with a key difference. Jewelry is worn and creates an intimate experience for both wearer and beholder. It involves a level of performance, even spectacle. In this way, a wearable edible suggests a doubling of pleasure, the pleasure of wearing and the pleasure of consuming, and a commingling of desire and desirability, with the anticipation of fulfillment and the need to replenish never too far behind. Jewelry with perishables also inevitably raises questions of transience and mortality.

Leslie M. Riches, Shelby Ferris Fitzpatrick, and Maru Almeida present different takes on the social and socializing aspects of a wearable edible. In *It's All About Proportion*, Riches explores the ideas of ration and beauty in relation to our obsession with faddish diets and to formal dining etiquette. A study in dynamic symmetry, the pendant combines Victorian sterling flatware with two conflicting food groups. A fork, skewering a green bean, white mushroom, and broccoli flower, holds in check a teaspoon, containing three chocolate chips, the whole hanging from a silver chain.

On the other hand, Fitzpatrick's "floating" rings, canapé and cuff link hybrids, pose a balancing act for the wearer and emphasize the communal experience in a personal version of *Stone Soup*—an old French tale in which an outsider tricks the inhabitants of a village into contributing food to a soup that he starts with a stone having purported magical powers. The nine rings in the series feature silver shells and individual gold-plated

cavities that can hold food items. When filled, each of the rings offers a bit of sustenance to the wearer and/or the viewer. Together they create a dish. Once the food is consumed, the surprise ending takes the form of the streamlined interior, an elegant, sculptural component in its own right.

Eye candy gains new meaning with Almeida's sugar-based rings. Part science experiment, part artistic manipulation, the series exploits sugar's preserving, sweetening, medicinal, and decorative properties, while alluding to historic trade routes. Imported to Europe from North Africa, sugar was originally a substance for the court only, and later as production increased, an opiate for the masses. Now, it's recognized as an underlying contributor to obesity and diabetes when consumed in excess. In the topographic-like *Crystallines*, one ring contrasts crystallized formations with a string band, another uses a silver band as a foil, and the remaining two are completely embedded with garnets and cubic zirconia, respectively. Playful, delicate, and alluring, these socialized confections are the perfect stand-ins for the sugarcoated, "look-don't-touch" stereotype of the female.

Spices—once exotic and pricey and now common—represent another coveted commodity of the trade routes, and this geo-political reference informs Kristi Zevenbergen's *Spice Cabinet*. A witty reference to the household furnishing, this talismanic pendant features 14 capsules filled with richly colored and textured spices, attached to a hand-knitted silver wire necklace. Related ideas of portability, practicality, and preservation team up with issues of personal identity, health, and alternate medicine in Addy Thorton's confessional *Food for the Hormonally-Challenged Middle-Aged Woman*. In the delicate seaweed and radish composition, the frayed and shriveled materials poignantly echo a woman's changing bodily characteristics.

Ideas of consumption and well-being climax in Charles Lewton-Brain's provocative diptych *Wishing for Miracle*, featuring pendants of petit pains and fish. A taste of surrealism enlivens their raw, push-pull beauty, and their shock value simulates a Zen moment, wherein a single gesture disrupts reason and triggers a flash of understanding. This, the most literal of the examples discussed, is also the most allegoric. The references to Jesus and the miracle of Feeding the Five Thousand give a bittersweet critique of our yearning to believe beyond rational thinking, while commenting on the current state of political affairs. At its most basic, the ephemeral still life represents the ultimate *vanitas* by contrasting our need to eat to stay alive with the folly of earthly desires and our dream of immortality.

As this sampling of artistic visions attests, wearable edibles bring together the biological, the social, and the spiritual in new and startling ways. The alchemical mutation of food into art, like the transformation of the body into a stage for consumption, offers a cornucopia of possibilities for raising consciousness and sensual awareness, while gratifying our imagination and sense of play. ✠

Art historian **Sarah Tanguy** lives in Washington, D.C.

clockwise from left
Addy Thorton's
Food for the Hormonally-Challenged Middle-Aged Woman, 2004
seaweed, radish
Photo: Keith Rincon

Charles Lewton-Brain
Wishing for Miracle, 2004
bread loaves, fish

Leslie M. Riches
It's All About Proportion, 2004
silver, green bean, mushroom, broccoli, chocolate
Photo: Keith Rincon

STUDIO

Cynthia Eid

by Claire Sanford

The approach to Cynthia Eid's studio reveals nothing of what lies inside. A steep driveway off a suburban street leads to a simple red house tucked into a hillside. As you walk down the path to the front door, the only indication of the studio within is an assortment of rocks and objects sandwiched between window blinds and glass. Once inside, one sees little delineation between work and living spaces. Rather, there is an observable change of texture as the densely covered walls and shelves shift from African art to family photographs to metalsmithing books to racks of hammers. In between are curious collections and hints of the family's other lives: musical instruments, an arrangement of metal purses, and a beautiful silver mezuzah (made by Munya Upin) on the studio doorframe.

Cynthia Eid with her metal purse collection, 2004
Photo: Claire Sanford

Consisting of three small rooms crammed with tools, boxes, and books (including a spare bathroom complete with shower stall/patina spray booth), the studio is part and parcel of Eid's home. This is not a grand sanctuary, it is the workspace of someone who has carved time and place out of a full family life. By the confines of the available square footage, the studio seems to have grown like a bonsai tree: small yet fully formed. The bench space is painfully tiny and the soldering area appears totally inadequate considering the scale of the commissions Eid produces. But, whether it is through disciplined and methodical work habits or by an ability to just "make do," Eid creates pieces that defy this constriction and exist fully and beautifully in large and magnificent spaces.

The artist's workbench in her Massachusetts home and studio, 2004
Photo: Claire Sanford

This is also clearly the space of a curious technician. Flanked by two hydraulic presses (one large, one enormous), the workbench is stacked high with forms and adaptors for the deep draw press, parts for doing microfolding, as well as traditional forming tools but with little evidence of traditional approaches. There's no room for giant stumps, stakeholders come out only when necessary, and forming is achieved by what the artist calls a "crazy mix" of hammering and machines. Eid (along with Anne Larsen Hollerbach and Phil Poirier) is considered an "Official Product Tester" for Bonny Doon and has provided valuable research and feedback to Lee Marshall. In addition to evaluating the tools and suggesting improvements, they help write the instructions and, according to Marshall, "meet the needs of the end-user that simply can't occur in another manner." You can also tell that Eid loves playing with possibilities. "Thor," the larger of the presses, gently

hums as she demonstrates its slow-motion dance. New tools often lead to new designs as well as the need to solve technical problems leading to new techniques. While there is the danger of these "tool and technique" packages producing dull or cookie-cutter results, Eid manages to use them as a means for exploration and exploitation rather than an aesthetic end in of themselves.

True to the necessity of "making do," a full-scale drawing of her current commission is pinned to the wall of a narrow hallway outside the forming room. Even after backing up well into the room it was still difficult to see the entire drawing in proper perspective. Upstairs, the parts in progress sat on the family pool table.

Appearing as musical notes on forged brass lines, stylized letters of the Hebrew alphabet spell out "hallelujah." The organic and fluid quality of Eid's metal forms seems well suited to the graceful movement of Hebrew calligraphy. Formed out of thick copper, with flowery hammered edges, the pieces float along the surface of the horizontal lines, creating a sense of movement in the shadows and patterns on the wall. As she often works on many things concurrently, shifting from jewelry to holloware to large-scale installations, there are bits and pieces and experiments tucked everywhere. Looking at Eid's work in different stages of completion seems to reveal more of her aesthetic and inventive approach than is necessarily evident in the finely finished end product.

During the visit there were several times when Eid's eyes brightened: while describing her two sons, Eric and Andy, and their achievements (musical and otherwise); her participation in the Reiner Family Band (which includes her sons and husband, David Reiner); and, in particular, the Judaic commission work she has done over the years. To be able to combine the technical with the spiritual seems deeply satisfying to her and there is a distinction between how she describes those commissions and, for example, a lucrative jewelry commission. This subtle but clear difference was very moving. As her sons neared the age of their Bar Mitzvahs, Eid became interested in making Judaic objects for her family. A Seder plate exhibited at the Spertus Museum in Chicago was the entrée to her first large-scale commission for a synagogue. For her, this work has turned out to be the perfect blend of the gift of making and the belief in what you're making. On her desk is a paper model of an *Eternal Light* she created for her synagogue. Each member's hands, from young children to the very old, were photographed and photo-etched into metal. The cut-out hands surround the light, appearing at first as an oversized unfolding flower, but a closer look reveals the individually expressive shapes of worshipping hands. A simple but powerful statement of faith and community, the sculpture illustrates one of the key themes of Eid's artistic life. Despite working in a small and isolated studio, a strong sense of community awareness is apparent in most everything she does, whether it is through commissions, teaching, her team Bonny Doon explorations, her 20+ year participation in "Forge and Gorge" (a women metalsmiths potluck discussion group), or playing banjo and backup vocals for the Reiner Family band. The "meaning" in her work, when it is an important element, comes from the successful blending of her ideas, her spirituality, and her family. ✠

Pearly Ends (bracelet), 2004
sterling silver, 14k gold, freshwater pearls
2 x 3 x 1"

Eternal Light of Community, 2003
copper
15 x 21 x 15"
Photo: Barry Blau

Claire Sanford is a metalsmith, jeweler, and partner in Top Dog Studio in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Ira Sherman
The Injector, 2002
stainless steel, steel, brass, glass garnet
30 x 10 x 11"
Photo: Paul Schroder

Protective Ornament

Dressed for Defense

Kelly Malec-Kosak
Three Rings from "Urban Wear" series, 1999
silver, steel, cement
Photo: Jeff Sabo

by Suzanne Ramljak

Our life is not a mutual helpfulness; but rather, cloaked under due laws-of-war, named "fair competition" and so forth, it is a mutual hostility.[1] – Thomas Carlyle

Rarely do we think of jewelry as a matter of life and death. On the contrary, ornament is typically perceived as superfluous or even trivial. In spite of this view, jewelry and other bodily adornment can indeed facilitate our survival in various ways. Among the many roles that ornament performs, perhaps its most compelling is its ability to protect us from harm.

This crucial capacity of jewelry and other wearables is underscored by etymology. The word ornament is rooted in the Latin *ornamentum*, meaning "equipment, trappings, embellishment." Ornament's original function was understood to exceed mere decoration and to serve as a way of equipping a person for ceremony or battle. Similarly, the Sanskrit term for ornament, *alamkara*, encompasses meanings that include invigoration and making one fit.

Jewelry's basic safeguarding function is evident in humankind's earliest creative efforts; in the profusion of portable objects including amulets, talismans, and charms that were designed to repel evil and attract good fortune. Contemporary metal artists are likewise creating works that reveal ornament's ability to protect and empower. While some produce pieces that can actually thwart an attack, others take a more conceptual approach to our need for bodily defense.

Biologically speaking, Homo sapiens are an endoskeleton species, unequipped with an outer shell to shield our vital organs. Humans also lack other natural protective mechanisms such as horns, pincers, or quills. Our best means of defense is our intellect and skill at devising anatomical enhancements. Such "extensions," as Marshall McLuhan called them,[2] expand our physical range and help us adapt to changing conditions. Metal is ideally suited to this task of armoring ourselves. The material's unique properties have made it a trusty defender in everything from body armor to chastity belts to bulletproof vests.

Armor has been essential to the life of mankind from the beginning of recorded time. Helmets, the earliest known type of armor, afford maximum defense for the most critical part of the body and are still required gear for battle and sport. Military helmets have inspired metalsmith Miel-Margarita Paredes,

Miel-Margarita Paredes
Thank You (helmet), 2000
copper, brass
16 x 14 x 24"

Diane Field
Chain Mask, 2003
steel, gold
22 1/2 x 4"

headgear provides. His *Cranial Cradle* (1997) shields the wearer's eyes from sight, providing a powerful means of psychological protection. Page notes that such facial disguise poses a threat to law enforcement and that many states have outlawed wearing masks in public. The artist's work is particularly prescient given the current increase in governmental scrutiny and erosion of privacy.

Confronted with the threatening conditions of contemporary civilian life—including overcrowding, rampant crime, gun proliferation, and terrorism—the need to protect both body and mind has only grown. Kelly Malec-Kosak created the "Urban Wear" series to aid her survival in New York City, where she moved from the Midwest. Her rings combine weapon-like protrusions—spikes, thorns, blades—with a graspable element that helps the wearer focus and avoid being frozen by fear. These adornments proved to be effective deterrents, and Malec-Kosak reports that people duly shunned her when she wore them on the subway. David Akins's *Volatile Relationship* (1999), a brooch emitting a jet of flame, does not presuppose an urban setting, but does insert an aggressive element between the wearer and any would-be assailant.

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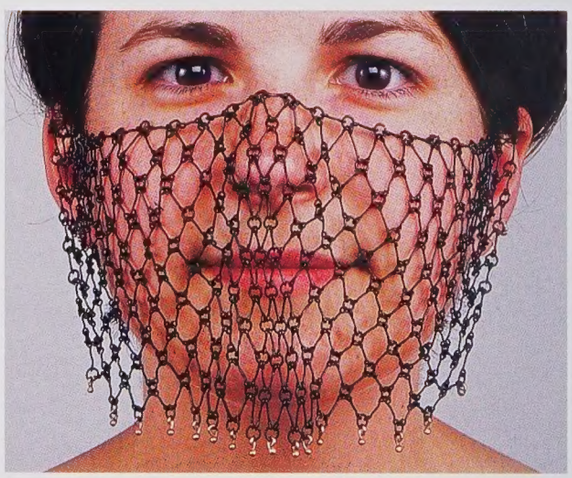
who enlists animal forms in keeping with historical armor that used beastly imagery to endow the wearer with ferocity. Her helmet, ironically titled *Thank You* (2000), engulfs the head in a large metal creature that appears anything but grateful. Diane Field's *Chain Mask* (2003) also has a military precedent, in this case the chain mail of Spanish conquistadors. Created for a Peruvian fashion designer, her metal veil would not ward off a spear, but it does pay tribute to the great tradition of weaving metal into protective fabric.



Belgian artist Jan Fabre looks to the animal world for models of defense and survival. Admiring the outer skeletons of insects, his works suggest that humans must also develop a shell to insure the species' survival. For his performance piece *Sanguis/Mantis* (2001) he donned full body armor with a praying mantis helmet, while drawing with blood to evoke "a meditation on life and death and the nature of man."[3] Fabre has also used real beetle shells in his work, showcasing the indelible color and immense strength of the scarab's covering.

David Page's masks and helmets hark back to medieval armor, but go beyond military fortification to examine the "psychic transformation" that such

The methods of protection have evolved throughout history in line with changing threats; armor has kept pace with arms. In our technologically advanced culture, assaults are more

likely to come in the guise of machines, not men. Rather than shielding ourselves from physical attack, we are increasingly forced to arm ourselves against invasions of privacy. According to engineer and cyborg Steve Mann, we have witnessed a historical shift from guns to cameras and computers. "We live in a world in which the appearance of thugs and bandits is not ubiquitous," says Mann. "Surveillance and mass media have become the new instruments of social control."[4]

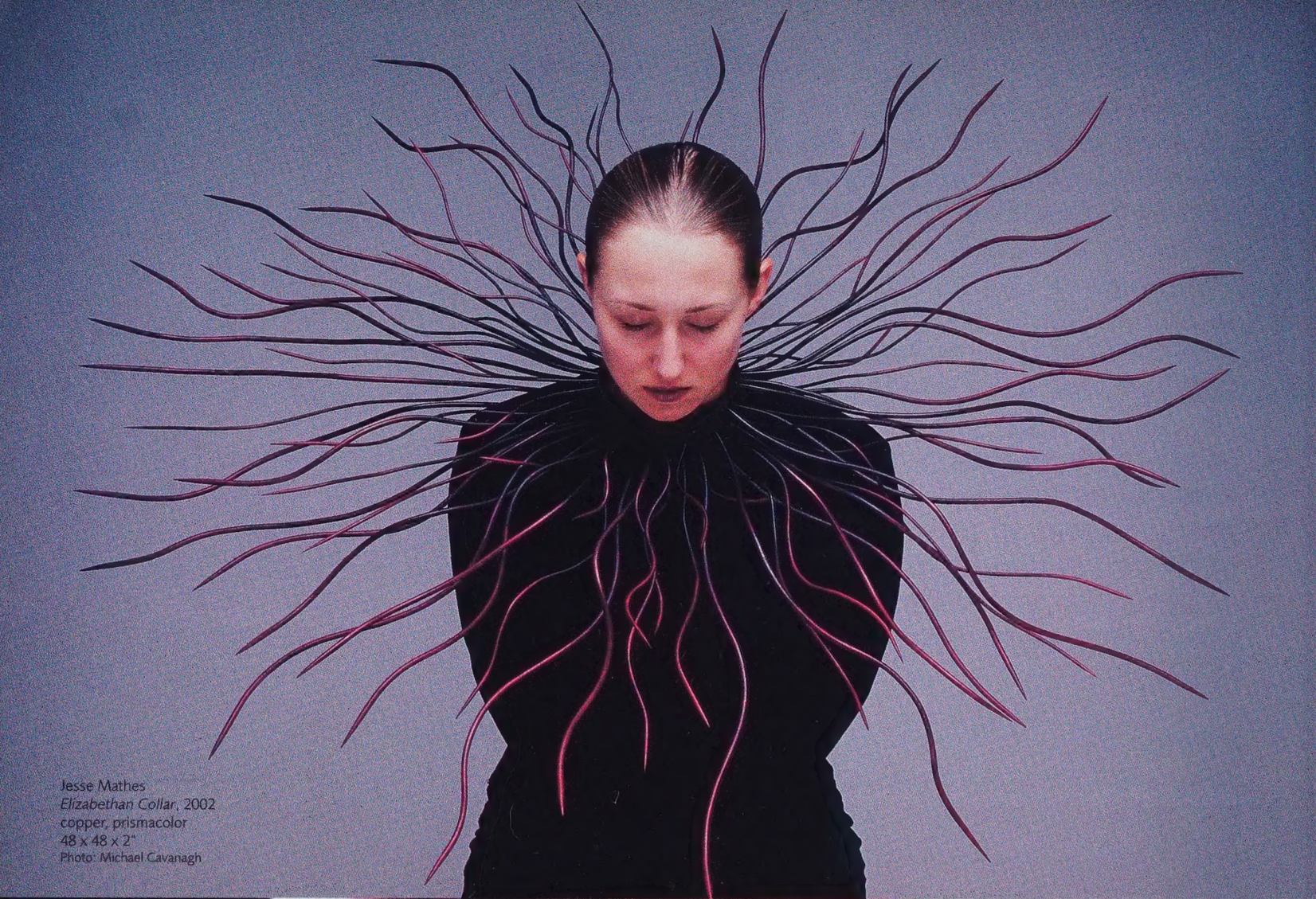
To counter public surveillance and as a tool of self-empowerment, Mann has developed a series of tetherless, wearable computers. Mann's WearComp and EyeTap inventions—tiny personal computers with head-mounted camera and miniature monitor over one eye—offer users a number of features, including a visual memory bank to aid with future identification and provide an alternative to public video footage; a "way finding" function that gives directions through projected maps and instructions; a safety net of "virtual escorts;" and the ability to send instant signals if in danger.

The personal safety feature of such smart clothing could prove especially valuable to women, who remain the most frequent victims of violence. As part of an ongoing project, "Panaceas to Persistent Problems: Devices for Social Survival," artist Ira Sherman devised a number of anti-rape mechanisms aimed at guarding a woman's genitalia. The series includes *The Injector* model (2002), which employs pneumatically powered syringes that simultaneously inject dye and sedative into the would-be rapist, disabling and marking him for later detection. This is a chastity belt with a vengeance; it doesn't just defend the wearer but goes on the offensive to attack the intruder.

Regardless of technological advances, women must still contend with the age-old battle of the sexes. Seeking to establish a safe zone in the presence of antagonistic men, metalsmith Jesse Mathes turned to the aggressive apparel of England's Queen Elizabeth I. The assertive ruffs and corsets in Mathes's "Territorial Defense" series fulfill her own requirement for safety and relieve "feelings of frustration and anger generated by gender power struggles."[5] The same urge for

David Akins
Volatile Relationship, 1999
steel, brass, rubber, butane
3 x 3 x 1"

Jan Fabre
Sanguis/Mantis, 2001
metal, leather, cotton
79 1/2 x 29 1/2"



Jesse Mathes
Elizabethan Collar, 2002
copper, prismacolor
48 x 48 x 2"
Photo: Michael Cavanagh

Erica Stankwytch Bailey
Elegant Defense, 2001
sterling silver,
freshwater pearls
8 x 8 x 3"

self-protection spurred Erica Stankwytch Bailey to create her "Elegant Defense" jewelry. These works attempt to reconcile two often conflicting needs; to be protected and to be comfortable with the means of defense. To avoid having to choose between ease and security, Stankwytch Bailey designed the pieces to feel good on wearers while unnerving observers. "Today it is becoming more and more important that we protect ourselves physically," she maintains. "It seems only natural that personal adornments play a part in our new defensive lifestyles."[6]

Not surprisingly, our new ethos of danger has also found expression within popular fashion. Runways for the fall 2003 season were filled with fashions that conveyed an armored invulnerablity, as designers from Prada to Gucci showed clothes with "super-structuring" that resembled breastplates, helmets, and gauntlets. Similarly, the diamond industry's 2003 ad campaign featured images of women warriors whose right-hand diamond rings conferred an almost bionic power. According to the campaign's creator: "The girl is sort of like Wonder Woman...The ring is part of her armor and the light symbolic, a sign of a kind of supernatural strength."[7]

Indeed, jewelry's "symbolic" power to protect the wearer can be just as potent as any physical barrier, whether one dons a diamond ring or turns to more sophisticated forms of adornment. A number of artists are creating works with the specific purpose of bracing a wearer's psyche, providing a form of "psychic armoring" in the words of jeweler Sharon Church. Such jewelry can be viewed in the tradition of ancient amulets and charms. Like amulets, much jewelry is faith-based; it relies on the wearer's belief in the object's power to bring security and well-being. The potential of jewelry to serve as a psychological aid, bolstering our courage and self-confidence, cannot be overestimated.

Nancy Worden's recent work addresses this lack of faith or self-assurance, particularly a condition she calls "spiritual osteoporosis" that she has observed in middle-aged women. Her series, appropriately titled "Exosquelette" (French for exoskeleton) focuses on the wearer's back and attempts to provide strength for women lacking "emotional backbone."

It could be argued that all jewelry functions as mental battle gear, preparing us for power struggles and symbolic skirmishes over status, wealth, or sexual prowess. The fortification provided by psychological means is equally effective as any body armor. Even within a military context, projecting an impression of power can be the best means of defense, regardless of actual strength. "The first thing to remember about all armor is that it is 50% physically defensive and 50% mentally defensive," asserts chain mail expert Dylon Whyte. "Part of any fight is throwing your opponent off guard."[8] The strategy of disarming your opponent through visual splendor applies equally to the wearing of ornament. An agreeably charming object can be coercive by distracting or placating a viewer. According to cultural historian Wendy Steiner: "The aesthetic symbolism of ornament involves a gesture of 'pleasing.' . . . It is part of the ideology of charm, the use of beauty to exert power through pleasing."[9] Although seemingly contradictory, one can gain advantage in an encounter by fulfilling another's desire for pleasurable forms.

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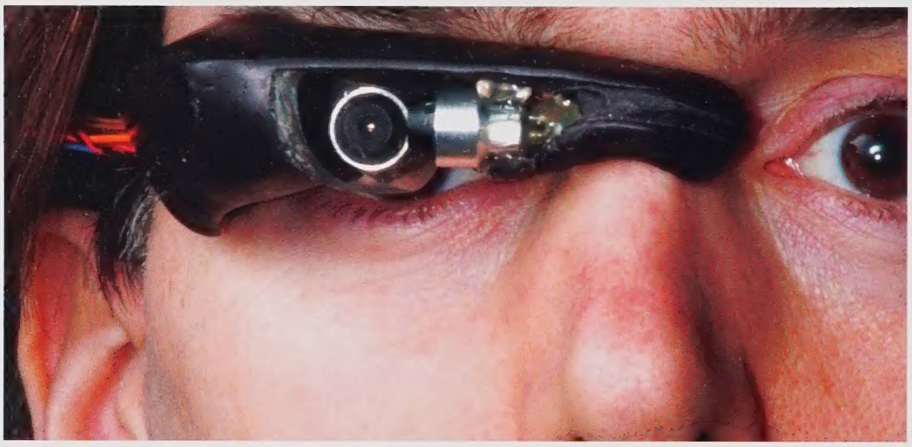
Other less physically assertive modes of defense include the use of camouflage. As in the animal world, such disguise can be a crucial tactic of survival. Within a social context, it is sometimes safer to wear generic or nondescript jewelry to avoid attention. Posters in New York subway cars advising passengers to conceal or remove valuable jewelry endorse this strategy of blending into the background to escape being targeted for crime.

Our current era has been ominously titled the

"age of terror." It is a period marked by great fear and uncertainty. As one writer summarized it: "It is not socially acceptable to deny the fear of terrorism. Terror is our totem—we believe in it."[10] A new market has sprung up to cater to this creed of anxiety. Demands for security services are booming and retail outlets like Safer America, which specializes in homeland security and personal protection, offers shoppers "peace of mind" with everything from gas masks to explosive detectors. But the biggest threat today may be the *fear* of danger rather than any actual harm. Roosevelt's World War II adage, "there is nothing to fear but fear itself" rings even more true within our new war on terror.

Steve Mann
EyeTap, 2003
wearable computer, camera, monitor



It is a period marked by great fear and uncertainty. As one writer summarized it: "It is not socially acceptable to deny the fear of terrorism. Terror is our totem—we believe in it."[10]

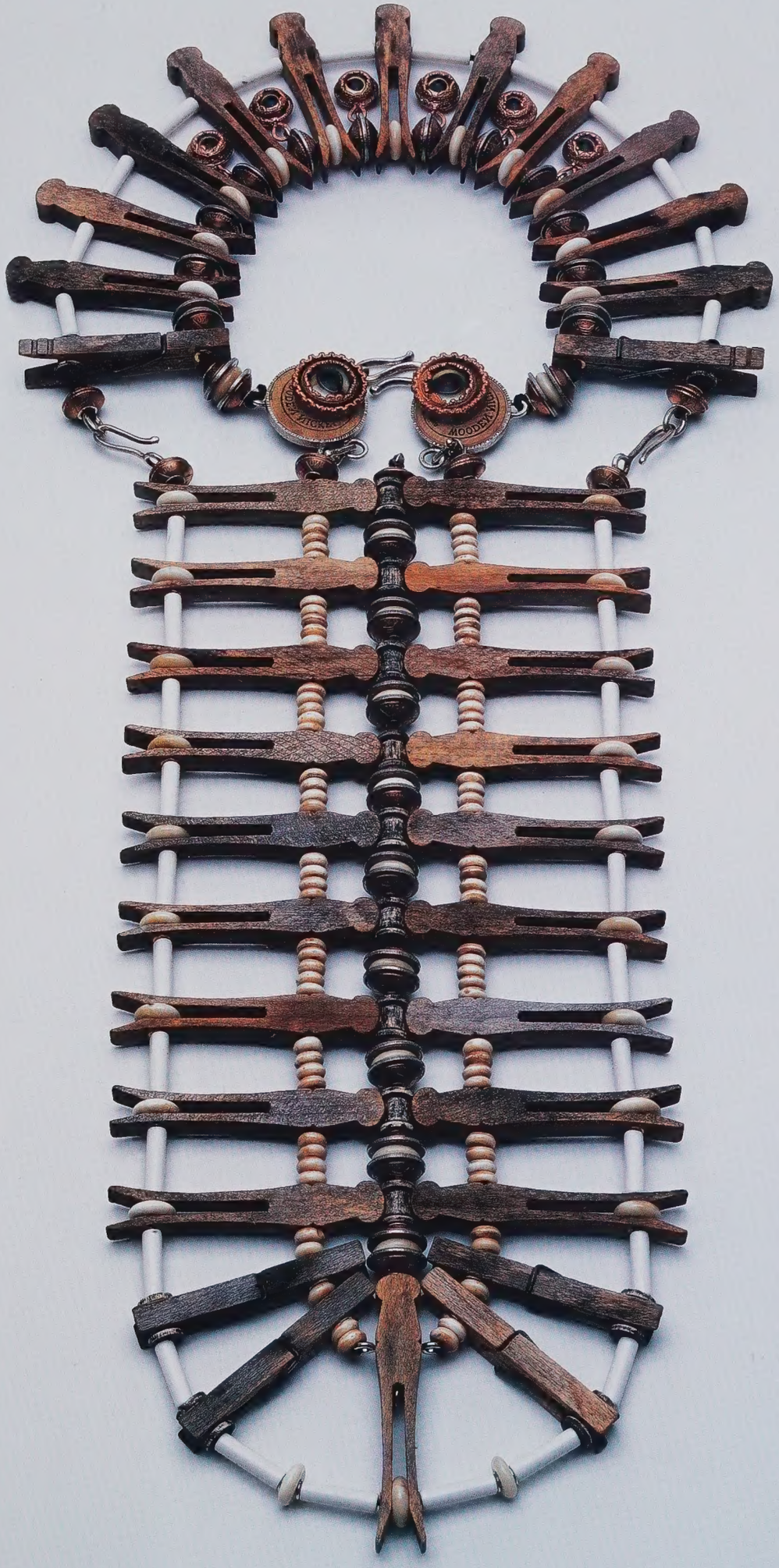
In the same way that belief can help counter fear, so too can information; knowledge is power in an information age. We increasingly turn to science and medicine to protect us from illness, and even from our own mortality. In this regard medical jewelry may be one of the most effective means of protective adornment. The Medic Assist company produces bracelets and necklaces engraved with lifesaving data—allergies, medications, and pre-existing conditions—and even sells *Alert-A-Medic* heart-shaped pendants with a panic button that automatically dials 911. In a real life-threatening situation, a wearable Rx or allergy warning could be the ultimate defense against death. A forerunner in this genre of medical jewelry is metalsmith Mary Ann Scherr. Her innovative prototypes of 30 years ago were not just informational, but fully functioning devices including a Heart-Pulse Sensor Bracelet and Oxygen Mask Pendant.

Accessorizing for today's aggressive climate requires more than a pair of matching earrings. Increasingly we need other protective trappings, both tangible and abstract. In our post 9/11 world we face the renewed threat of a nuclear bomb or biological weapons. These invisible attackers (radiation or germs) will require new accoutrements for defense; perhaps a colorful NukAlert key chain with built-in radiation monitor and alarm. Instead of full body armor, our best means of protection may well be chemical. A locket with a potassium iodide pill to prevent thyroid cancer in the wake of a nuclear blast could soon become the next jewelry fad.

More than 150 years have passed since British historian Thomas Carlyle wrote this essay's opening quote, in which he bemoans the hostility of civilized life. The fact remains that we must struggle to survive, or at least to maintain some semblance of security. It is no small comfort to know that jewelry and ornament can play a key role in our defense. ⧗

Suzanne Ramljak is an art historian and editor of *Metalsmith*.

1 Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (1843).
2 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).
3 Interview with Jan Fabre, 2001, www.studiovisit.com.
4 Steve Mann, "Wearable Computing as Means for Personal Empowerment," keynote address at the International Conference on Wearable Computing, Fairfax, Virginia, May 1998.
5 Jesse Mathes, unpublished artist statement, 2004.
6 Erica Stankwytch Bailey, unpublished artist statement, 2004.
7 Ed Evangelista, quoted in Ginia Bellafante, "Suiting up with the New Woman Warrior," *New York Times*, August 26, 2003.
8 Dylon Whyte, "A Brief History of Armour" (2002), www.artofchainmail.com.
9 Wendy Steiner, "Interview," *Metalsmith*, Fall 2001.
10 Michael Wolff, "What, Us Worry? Yes, Us Worry," *New York Magazine*, February 24, 2003: 31.



Nancy Worden
Exosquelette #Two, 2003
copper, silver, wood, bone, glass
28 x 12 1/2 x 1"
Photo: Rex Rystedt

Chandelier, 1978
design based on Arts and Crafts
architecture of Greene and Greene
sterling silver
32 x 26"
Photo: Robert Hurling

William Frederick

Taking the Work as It Comes

by Polly Ullrich

Daniel Pederson's planishing hammer came into the possession of William Frederick in a way that still provokes emotion. Pederson, a master Norwegian silversmith renowned for his shy but courtly manners and deft hammer marks, was co-owner of the venerable Kalo Shop, one of Chicago's earliest and most prominent Arts and Crafts metalworking enterprises. Pederson died in 1970, the same year the hugely successful shop closed, after selling its handmade silver objects to three generations of Chicagoans. At its height, the shop employed 25 silversmiths and opened an outlet in New York City.

Ring, 1970
commissioned by Marquette University as a gift for the Dalai Lama
14k gold, turquoise
band height 3 1/4"

Later, Frederick, himself a Chicago silversmith, visited Robert Bower, the shop's former business manager. Bower pulled out an old box and opened it to reveal 32 carefully wrapped hammers for raising and planishing silver holloware, forged and fashioned by Daniel Pederson himself. "I know you can't buy a hammer like this anymore," Bower told Frederick, who had been Pederson's student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Then he wrapped them back up. "Placing the box on the floor, he closed it, and he leaned down and kissed the box," recalls Frederick, who had offered to buy them. "It brings tears to my eyes, thinking about that. He was letting go of those hammers."

Bower was actually saying good-bye to a pivotal era in Chicago art history, when the city became a focus of Arts and Crafts activity and led a renaissance in metalsmithing. Well-known Chicago silversmiths—people such as Clara Barck Welles, who founded Kalo, Robert Jarvie, and others—set up shop during the Arts and Crafts period but inspired a community of metal artists that existed well through Modernism and into the last half of the twentieth century. William Frederick is an heir to that tradition, and at age 83, he is old enough to remember and tell stories about the best of these artists. A craftsman/raconteur with a mischievous wit, he has filled commissions for silver objects in his one-person North Side Chicago workshop for the last 50 years.

Despite his age, Frederick is still operating at full professional tilt, pushing as hard as he can into demanding projects. Although he complains at times about arthritis, his hands are strong and his eyes sure. He epitomizes a life lived in the American crafts that emerged after World War II—he went to college as a returning veteran and then supported himself fully with studio work during his long career. Frederick has shunned university teaching ("I'm much too soft to be a teacher," he says), although he holds a degree in industrial design from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a BFA and MFA

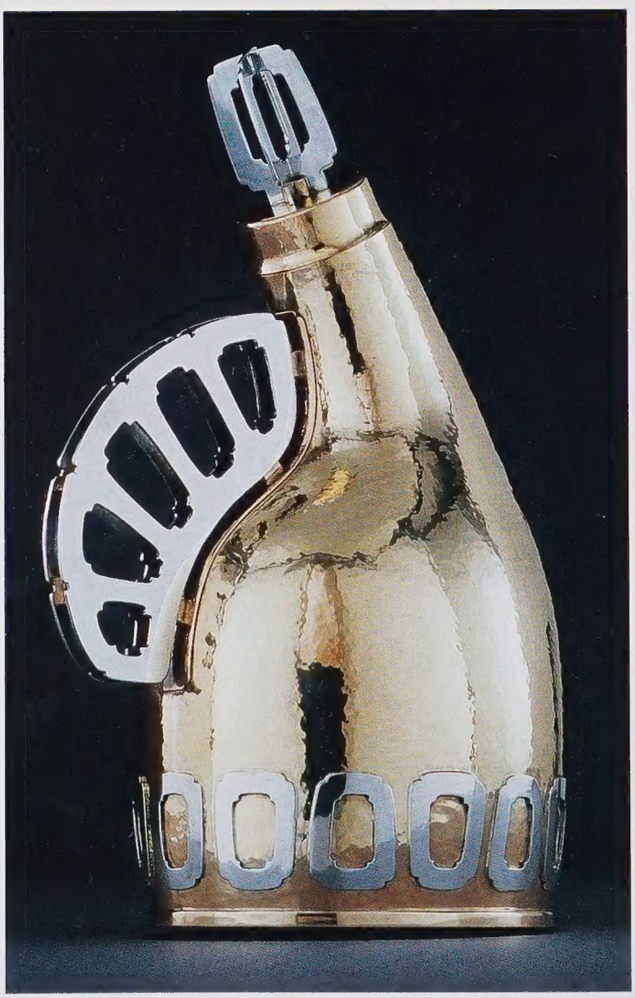
from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has met movie stars, politicians, and even a Catholic cardinal because of his commissions. He has exhibited his work periodically in national exhibitions. And in 2001, the Society of American Silversmiths awarded him its Hans Christensen Sterling Silversmith Lifetime Achievement Award.

"Bill Frederick is the epitome of a fantastic silversmith," says Jeffrey Herman, the executive director of the Society of American Silversmiths. "He creates solid, heavy gauge work that is meant to be used, and even somewhat abused, that takes on character and is comfortable in its function." Herman estimates that there are perhaps only 50 to 75 professional non-academic silversmiths in the United States who make a livelihood solely by specializing in functional holloware and flatware. Most young metalsmiths concentrate on jewelry because it is more lucrative, and public taste has veered away from silver for use in the home.

As a young silversmith, Frederick tried to get hired at the Kalo Shop, but Daniel Pederson turned him down, saying that he would be paid only one dollar a day. "I would have taken it," Frederick admits. His studio is now filled with approximately 500 handmade polished steel tools acquired from historic metal workshops in Chicago—not just Pederson's hammers but the whole tool collection from the Kalo Shop and its stumps (which were rescued just before they went to a junkyard), tools from the well-known Art Metal Studios, from the Lebolt and Company shop, and tools once owned by the idiosyncratic and immensely talented Chicagoan Renard A. Koehnemann, among others.

These tools are themselves small sculptures—heads, horses, irons, and stakes, forged and ground by the silversmiths themselves into liquid shapes, their surfaces butter smooth from decades of repeated use, the ash or maple handles of the hammers comfortable and balanced in the hand, with a small dent where the thumb nestles. They are what Frederick uses on a daily basis. The Chicago decorative arts historian Sharon Darling once affectionately referred to Frederick as "Son of Kalo." And indeed, the pieces that he produces from these tools have the Kalo spirit, if not exactly the Kalo look, resonating with Kalo's solidity, warmth, and a sweetness of line, but tempered by Frederick's own penchant for a reductive, Modernist simplicity.

It is Frederick's planishing hammer marks, applied at the very end of the hand-forming process for holloware and than left to dapple the surface of his finished peices, which most pointedly extend his work from the Kalo tradition.



Funerary Urn, 1987
bronze, sterling silver
12 x 5 1/2"
Photo: Robert Hurling

It is Frederick's planishing hammer marks, applied at the very end of the hand-forming process for holloware and then left to dapple the surface of his finished pieces, which most pointedly extend his work from the Kalo tradition. It was these marks that Hans Christensen, the charismatic Danish metalsmithing teacher at the School for American Craftsmen in Rochester, New York, discouraged when Frederick enrolled in a summer program there in the 1950s (Christensen preferred a shinier,

Chalice with Square Wire Base, 1974
sterling silver
6 1/2 x 5"
Photo: Robert Hurling

Monteith, 1985
design based on an 18th-century
Irish original
Britannica standard silver
8 1/2 x 14"
Photo: Robert Hurling

purer surface). But Frederick remembered how experienced silversmiths from Chicago never looked at the stamp at the bottom of a handmade silver object—they knew who formed it simply by identifying the planishing marks. So when Frederick went home to Chicago—he was born in nearby Sycamore, Illinois—he began leaving the hammer marks on his work again, as a reference to the humanism inherent in objects made by the hand, and as a sign of individual identity.

The aesthetic of Frederick's work is profoundly animated by his grounding in practical limits and ethical responsibilities. Before he found his calling as a metalsmith, Frederick as a very young man earned a reputation as a "pure designer" in an industrial design firm—rather than spewing out a wide selection of potential, optional designs for a new product, Frederick would concentrate his ideas into one single design that he could passionately argue was right.

Renaissance Chalice, 1989
design based on the
Great Chalice of Antioch
sterling silver, gold plate,
amethysts, diamond
7 x 5"
Photo: Robert Hurling

"Taking the work as it comes" has resulted in an extraordinarily varied body of functional silver work and now, at Frederick's age and level of experience, there is practically nothing that he cannot make in silver.

The influence of this design training has informed all of his silversmithing work: serendipity has substantially formed his career in the crafts. Frederick has never turned down a commission—he calls it "taking the work as it comes"—and he affirms the aesthetic significance of limits imposed by the financial and functional needs of his clients. Oddly, this spurs him to greater inventiveness: "When I design, I never think how I am going to make something," he says. "I just assume it can be done. And when the design gets finalized, then I get serious and plan how I am going to do it." Recently, however, he happily received "a blue sky job": an attorney commissioned a silver object, without financial or design limitations of any kind. Frederick immediately set to work on a design for a sterling silver pierced vase with floating bezels for stones.

"Taking the work as it comes" has resulted in an extraordinarily varied body of functional silver work and now, at Frederick's age and level of experience, there is practically nothing that he cannot make in silver. Silver objects have historically been intertwined with ritual, and Frederick has produced numerous objects within that category—including liturgical vessels (more than 400 commissions for religious chalices), commemorative trophies for corporations, reproductions of historical silver objects for individuals and associations, and the heavy, engraved chains worn by university presidents during ceremonies.

Each object has a story behind it, which Frederick is willing to recount. Like the one about an eighteenth-century elaborately repouséed montieth, a huge punch bowl, which he reproduced in Britannica standard silver for an American descendant of an aristocratic Irish family after the original was lost during hard times. Or the sterling silver chandelier in the style of the Arts and Crafts architects Greene and Greene, which the

Sleeve for Orchid Flower Pot, 2000
sterling silver
5 x 4 1/2"
Photo: Eric Ullrich

I know this because people come in and ask me to remake the ring—it must be important to them." Recently, Frederick was standing on the curb in front of his studio during the 2004 Chicago Marathon. Thousands of runners streamed by in the street. Suddenly a marathoner broke from the ranks, swerved toward him, and held up his left ring finger. "Remember me?" the guy said as he sped away. "You made my wedding ring."

"He looked vaguely familiar," says Frederick.

These stories underscore the sense of life and universal human experience resonant in Frederick's silver objects. Frederick's work could be described as an aesthetics of humanism—an aesthetics that is bound up with technique (how the work is made)

When William Frederick raises or planishes a piece of silver, he is continuing a lifelong struggle for perfection that, ironically, he hopes will ultimately fail.

Pair of Identical Flower Vases, ca. 1972
sterling silver
each 8 x 4 1/2"
Photo: Robert Hurling

Tea Service, 2001
sterling silver, East Indian rosewood
teapot 10 x 5"
Photo: Joan Tinkler

owner transported from Pasadena, California, to Lake Tahoe, Nevada—and built a new dining room to accommodate. Or the heavy, domed turquoise and gold ring commissioned by Marquette University for the Dalai Lama—before they knew that he never wore jewelry. Or the chalice commissioned by a seminarian who ran off to Las Vegas to become a dancer.

Frederick has made hundreds of wedding rings, at least three dozen of which were lost when their owners went swimming. "There are several in Lake Michigan," he says. "There's one in the plumbing of Mexico City and there's one off the coast of Hawaii.

and ethics (the moral values that went into its creation). The malleable characteristics of sterling silver allow it to be worked almost indefinitely in a circular process of repeatedly raising and annealing until the correct shape is achieved by continuously measuring it against a template made during the design process. The piece is then planished and, finally, polished. This careful process takes an enormous amount of time, and allows for the play of numerous judgments of quality and of conscience during the stages of forming.

When William Frederick raises or planishes a piece of silver, he is continuing a lifelong struggle

for perfection that, ironically, he hopes will ultimately fail. He is, however, engaging in what the art writer Glenn Gordon has called "a theological rage for quality." "I'm not a machine," Frederick said one day, as he layered tiny hammer marks into the surface of a chalice with one of Pederson's hammers. "Machine-made things are cold, hard, and perfect. My work is not perfect, and that gives it a character or a human quality. But I'm striving for perfection, and that's the driving force, the challenge of trying to make it perfect. For 50 years, I've been struggling for that. And I've probably never succeeded, really. But when you're finished with the hammering, the piece has got to match the template, if you're really controlling it. It's easy to say at that point, 'Well, it's a little too big, but let's let that go. Who's going to know?' That's when your ethics get involved in this process." Frederick has deliberately proposed commissions for clients that required the production of two identical objects in order to test whether he could make an object that exactly corresponds to another one.

Frederick works at a stump cut from an old tree trunk that came from his family's farm in Sycamore. To watch Frederick raise or planish a chalice on an iron at this stump is to watch an intricate dance: his hand holding the hammer strikes the surface of the vessel positioned on the iron with assurance and control, while the other hand continuously rotates and lifts the silver object away, then repositions it exactly on the part of the iron that will bring out the form best during the next blow. Frederick calls this "hammering blind"—since the iron is hidden under the chalice, the right place to hit can only be sensed kinesthetically and by recognizing the sound of the hammer blows.

"Knowing where you are" on the iron, then, becomes a larger metaphor for an existential state achieved through the efficient and fluid techniques of the most rigorous of silver artists. The correct sound produced by a raising hammer is loud, deep, muscular, and hard as it bends the silver into a form. A planishing hammer, however, has a high, solid, clear ring when it hits the correct part of the iron. A metalsmithing workshop can be noisy from hammer sounds, but Frederick has said that when he is enmeshed within the multiple and continuous actions required by his work at the stump, he hears only the distinct quality of the hammer sounds, never the noise.

In this way of working, technique becomes an integral part of meaning. When Frederick preserves his planishing hammer marks, rather than filing them off into the sheer sweep of a mirrored surface, he builds singularly human characteristics into the work and signifies an aesthetic based on the qualities of intimacy, accessibility, and sensory experience. Frederick aims for what he calls a "fresh" surface, acquired by rapid, even, side-by-side hammer marks that open out and bloom like brush strokes as the tool moves along the shimmering edge of the vessel. The marks must be placed exactly right, so that they do not need to be corrected, or muddied, by much polishing. The final object stands as a visual and haptic record of the gesture of those marks.

An array of tools in William Frederick's Chicago studio, 2004
Photo: Eric Ullrich

Frederick's work, while impeccable, stands for more than a perfect workmanship. Embedded in his objects are the personal qualities required to gain command of his field: longevity, perseverance, and the slow accretion of mastery. Despite the influence of Daniel Pederson, Frederick has traversed the trajectory of his long career primarily alone. "What I learned in the studio, I learned basically by myself," he says. "If you're working alone, you learn to make decisions yourself, and often you go the wrong way. And you never forget that. It's a learning process. In a sense, that's what life should be—an unfolding." ⧓

Polly Ullrich is a writer living in Chicago.

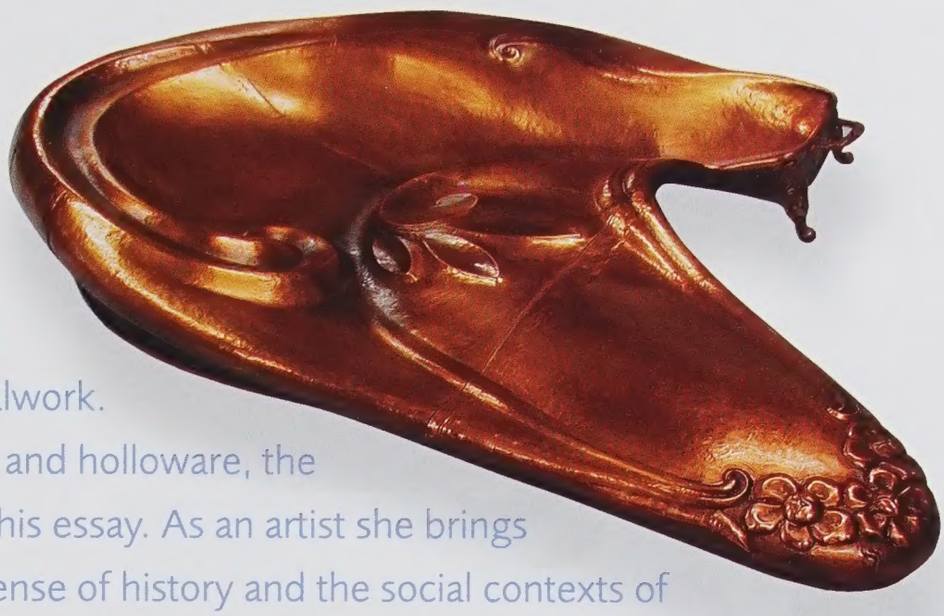
Melting Candelabrum, 2002
sterling silver
5 x 22 x 18"
Photo: Robert Storm

Bowl and Charger, 2003
silver and found objects
6 x 16 x 7"
Photo: Robert Storm

Of Hammers, History, and Household

The Holloware of Myra Mimlitsch-Gray

by David Revere McFadden



Chafing Dish, 2002
copper and found objects
9 x 45 x 33"

Myra Mimlitsch-Gray occupies a well-recognized position in the field of metalwork. She produces both jewelry and holloware, the latter being the subject of this essay. As an artist she brings to the workbench a keen sense of history and the social contexts of metalwork, particularly such precious metals as silver and gold. Mimlitsch-Gray belongs to the breed of contemporary artist that revels in the blur zone existing between craft, art, and design.

She acknowledges function in her work, but few pieces could be said to be functional. She honors the long and distinguished history of metalwork, while at the same time looking at tradition with a jaundiced eye. Her work refuses to live comfortably in any single category. It manifests the physicality of craft, the inventiveness of design, and the intellectual and visual content of art. Mimlitsch-Gray creates a vibrating atmosphere that surrounds her work, and engages the viewer on several levels at once.

Mimlitsch-Gray delivers her visual punches by surprising, or even shocking, the viewer through scale alone. Her *Chafing Dish* of 2002, which incorporates a found object (another example of the artist's blatant rejection of preciousness), simultaneously intrigues and repels the viewer, drawing us into a familiar world of tabletop utensils that have morphed into a massive (9 x 45 x 33") creature that dominates its platform. The unctuous spreading forms evoke a flow of glowing lava caught in mid-ooze. It is a work that could be described as Gorham tableware on steroids. At the same time, the piece also references the sensuous organic forms of metalwork by the art nouveau exponent Hector Guimard, whose muscular flexing door surrounds graced many Paris Metro stations at the turn of the twentieth century. Guimard was able to reconcile the elegant and beautiful aspects of natural forms—stems, vines, and branches—with a slightly sinister undertone that suggests that his pieces, like Kudzu vine, might continue to grow and strangle anyone who approaches.

At a further remove, Mimlitsch-Gray's extruded chafing dish also evokes the *knorpelwek* or auricular style in seventeenth-century Dutch silver produced by Adam and Paulus van Vianen of Utrecht. The style was so named because the writhing and rippling ornaments are held to resemble the complex folds and three-dimensional curves of the human ear. The grotesque hybrids of plants and animals comprising the ornamental neoclassical pierced gallery and foliate legs and handle are being consumed by the resplendent metal sludge. In these works, the artist may be suggesting that chaos triumphs over order, that time can be compressed or elongated like a time-lapse film played at fast forward, and that our factual memories can subtly and almost unnoticeably transform into surrealistic dreams—sometimes visions and sometimes nightmares.

Planished Rectangular Tray, 2002
copper
3 x 32 x 23"
Photo: Robert Storm

"The 'Hammermark' series was a kind of magnification technique, based on romantic propaganda that exposes the flaws of handwork as a mark of its handcrafted significance."

Handwrought Copper Tray, 1997
(detail)
copper
34 x 34 x 3"
Photo: Ken Gray

vocabulary of the van Vianen family makes their ewers, basins, and trays look as if they are having a meltdown. Mimlitsch-Gray maintains this same tension while constantly reminding us that domestic metal holloware is harmless and friendly. She does not stop by taking these core samples of history; in a final ironic gesture she preserves the remnants of a bastardized Victorian chafing dish whose delicate

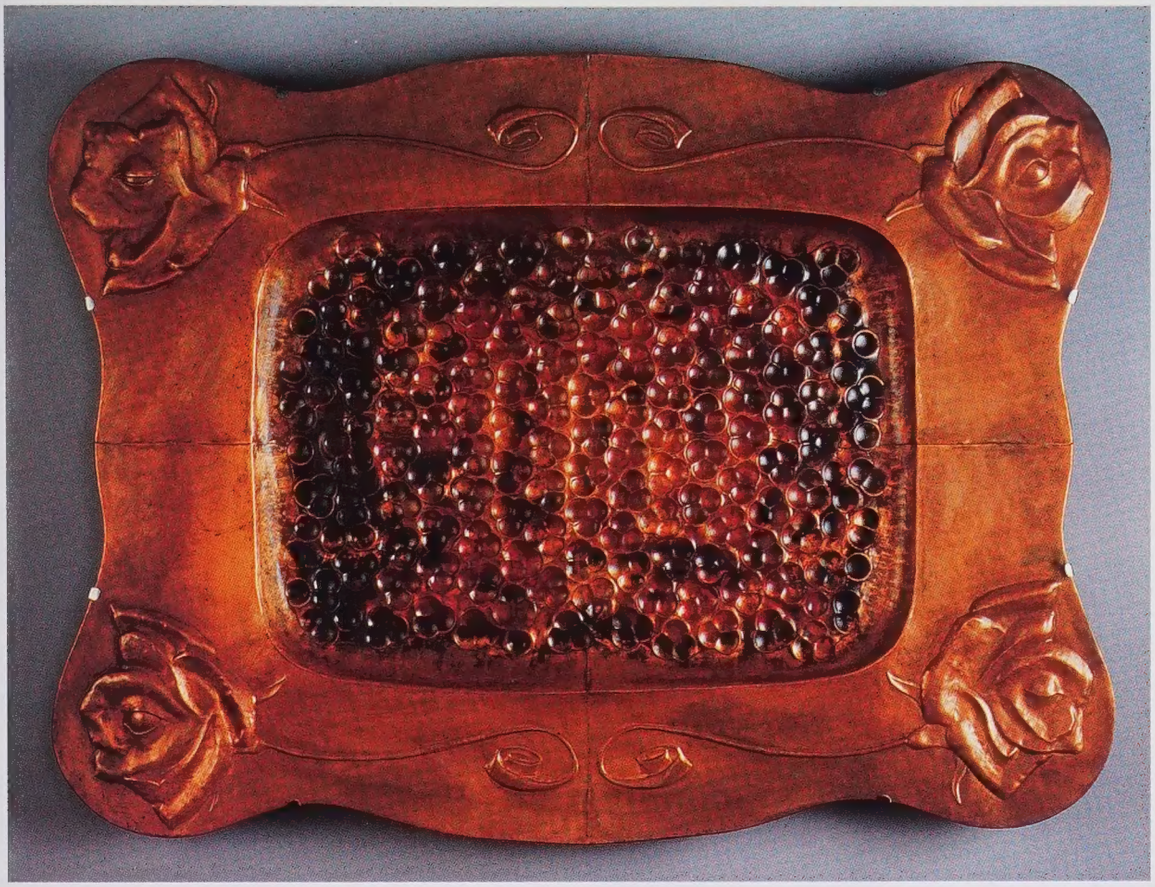
The changes in scale used to dramatize traditional forms in Mimlitsch-Gray's work are not always achieved by increasing the object's physical size alone. In the mid-1990s the artist carried out a series of serving trays, most of hammered copper, on which the primary ornamentation consists of outsized hammermarks. Historically, works raised in silver revealed the hammer blows of the craftsman midway in the process of production; these rough thumbprints of the smith's hammer that indicated that the piece was not yet finished were eradicated by further work with a planishing hammer that transformed the pock-marks into sleek, smooth, even mirror-like surfaces.

In an interview with Mimlitsch-Gray at the time of her 2004 exhibition at Gallery 81 in New Haven, the artist provided insight into the intellectual processes that lie behind her works. She explained, "the 'Hammermark' series was a kind of magnification technique, based on romantic propaganda that exposes the flaws of handwork as a mark of its handcrafted significance."

Mimlitsch-Gray has deftly exposed the soft

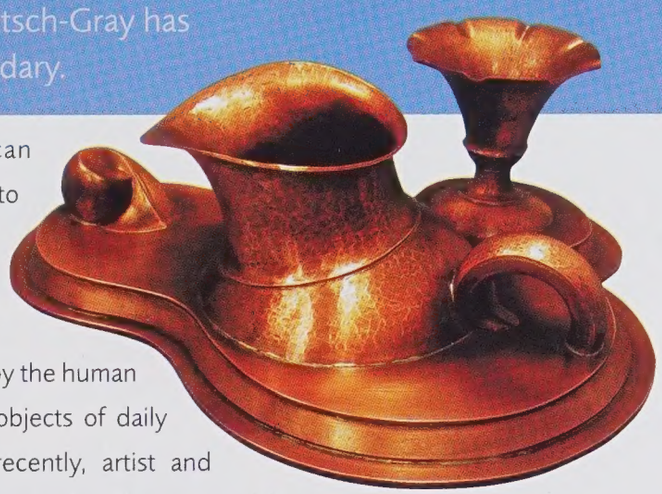
Handwrought Copper Tray, 1997
copper
34 x 34 x 3"
Photo: Ken Gray

Sugar Bowl and Creamer, 1990
copper, found objects
bowl 2 1/2 x 7 1/4 x 7 1/4"
creamer 4 x 7 1/4 x 3 1/2"
Photo: Larry Erickson



Four Roses, 1999
copper, steel
36 x 48 x 3"
Photo: Robert Storm

Something seems to have gone horribly wrong, and Mimlitsch-Gray has never missed an opportunity to exploit this aesthetic quandary.



Copper Craft Studies, 2003
copper
dimensions variable

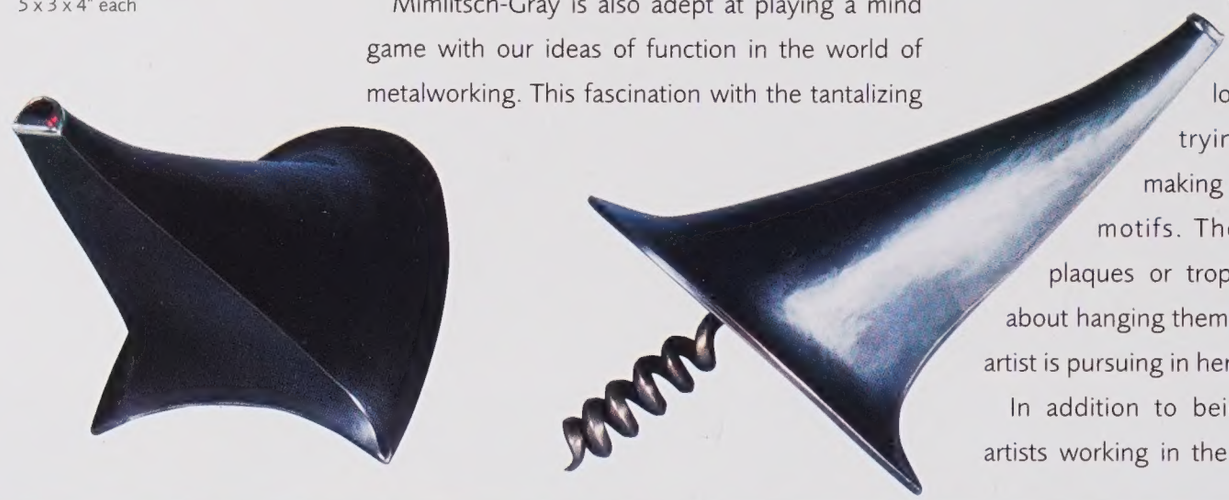
underbelly of the Arts and Crafts Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In Arts and Crafts practice, an object was made to look imperfect in order to proclaim its honesty and worthiness as something handmade. It was this "mark of the hand" that distinguishes these works from what was perceived as the emotionless and inhuman perfection of industrial products. Standards of craftsmanship continued to be valued during this period, but so, too, were the friendly flaws, irregularities, and accidents of the handmade. This led to a curious redefinition of quality. The curmudgeonly John Ruskin, whose ardent belief in the need for workmen in the crafts to regain their humanity, went so far as to claim "...so long as men work as men, putting their heart into what they do, it matters not how bad workmen they may be."[1] This attitude would have been inconceivable to craftsmen in the workshops of Benvenuto Cellini during the Renaissance, or of Paul de Lamerie, who worked for the British aristocracy in the first part of the eighteenth century.

The inherent naiveté of attitudes like Ruskin's caused the American author Willa Cather to comment that it was "the irregular and intimate quality of things made entirely by the human hand that endeared objects of daily life for her.[2] More recently, artist and author David Pye noted, "The two oddest propositions I have met are: (a) that workmanship is bad unless it is perfect. (b) that workmanship is bad unless it is imperfect. Sooner or later I hope to find them being defended both at once."[3] Something seems to have gone horribly wrong, and Mimlitsch-Gray has never missed an opportunity to exploit this aesthetic quandary.

A direct link between the artist's concern with perfection and the Arts and Crafts movement can be detected in Mimlitsch-Gray's *Four Roses* (1999). The scale of this presumably domestic object is intimidating. Its history as a form, however, derives from the standard household tray that sat comfortably on a sideboard as a resting place for a

tea service. The bumpy center of the tray reflects the artist's continued fascination with the mark of the hammer. The outer border, however, is a tongue-in-cheek caricature of the thousands of "homemade" copper trays and dishes produced in the studio/classrooms of metalworkers in both England and the United States. Rather than keeping to its basic role as a class project or souvenir, Mimlitsch-Gray's tray is elephantine in size, maximizing the cunning crudity of period work.

Mimlitsch-Gray is also adept at playing a mind game with our ideas of function in the world of metalworking. This fascination with the tantalizing suggestion of function is rarely consummated in reality. Much earlier in the artist's career, she was already suggesting that function itself functions as meaning. Her *Heels* (1989) is witty and provocative. Mimlitsch-Gray explores how function is a channel for commentary on women's role as both victims and accomplices in the ways that beauty is defined, as evident in the painful motif of corkscrews that hold the heel to the wearer's foot.



Heels, 1989
copper, brass, garnets
5 x 3 x 4" each

Mimlitsch-Gray is also adept at playing a mind game with our ideas of function in the world of metalworking. This fascination with the tantalizing suggestion of function is rarely comsummated in reality.

Other explorations of function and dysfunction can be seen in Mimlitsch-Gray's *Sugar Bowl and Creamer* (1990). The artist considers her work both "representational and abstract. When you make a teapot today, it is both object and subject; it becomes a representation of what a teapot can be within its total cultural context." Here the sugar bowl and creamer are only memories defined by the empty space they once inhabited. Mimlitsch-Gray says "from the very beginning, I responded to the idea of imaging the object, of the ghost being in there." She is intrigued by the poetic concept: "the shell is there, the image is there, but where is the *thing*?"

Over the past few years the artist has continued to conceive objects that have stopped halfway in their melting process, or which are midway on their way to being formed. "I called these works 'conflations,' a bringing together of melancholy and buoyancy. They're floating, and they're sinking. While there is an undeniable sense of loss in these works, I was trying to reclaim a little by making them lighter, cloud-like, motifs. They're meant to be like plaques or trophies. I actually thought about hanging them on the wall," an idea the artist is pursuing in her latest work, *Mantle*.

In addition to being one of the "smart" artists working in the decorative arts today, Mimlitsch-Gray is also aware of the need for continual evolution and change in her work. While regarding herself as a technically sophisticated craftsman, she also readily admits that, for her, perfection "has no fixed definition" and is something that eludes each work and drives her forward. "Every time I start a new direction in my work, I have to begin all over again and retrain myself entirely," she concedes. Myra Mimlitsch-Gray continues to evolve, creating exaggerated works that defy category and, in her words, "acknowledge the heroism of craft while being critical of it at the same time." ✖

David Revere McFadden is chief curator of the Museum of Arts & Design, New York.

[1] John Ruskin, *The Lamp of Art*, (1849).
[2] Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, (1927).
[3] David Pye, *The Nature of Design*, (1964).

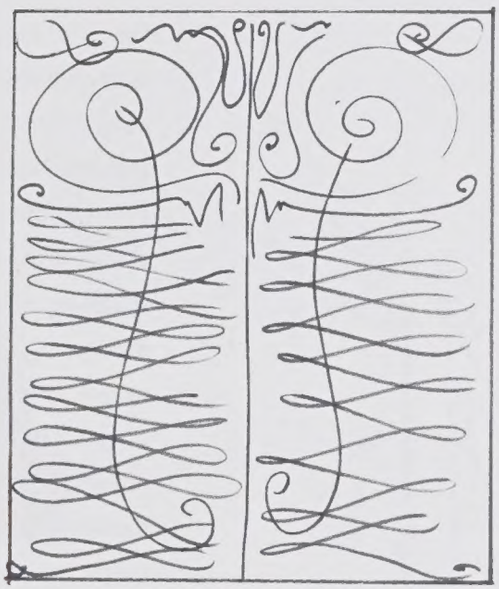
Conflation, 2002
copper
melting: 2 x 18 x 6"; deflating 3 x 9 x 6"

Mantle (work in progress), 2004
copper, found objects
17 x 81 x 12"

Albert Paley

Drawing as Visual Roadmap

by Anna Fariello



A drawing is an idea-gram. You draw a map when you want to go from, say, the airport to Lexington, Kentucky. You have a straight line and all these other lines cross it and it's route this and route that. You understand where you are going, but you have no idea what that trip's going to be like. — Albert Paley

Study for the Renwick Gallery Portal Gates, 1972
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
graphite on paper
29 x 23"

Renwick Gallery Portal Gates, 1974
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
forged and fabricated steel, brass, bronze, copper
90 x 72 x 4"

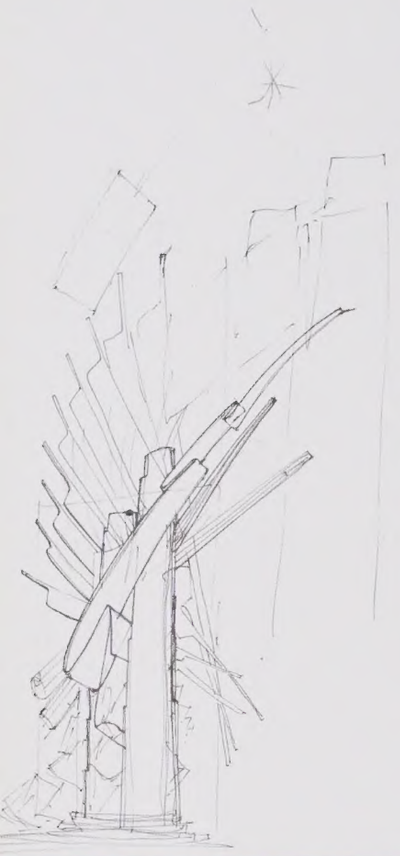
Finding one's way from concept to physical object is a challenge for any artist, a challenge that metalsmith Albert Paley has mastered. Having made a name for himself, nationally and internationally, as a sculptor who produces monumental works that grace the urban landscape, Paley may be creating the largest-scale metalwork in America today. Still, each of his pieces begins on the drawing board, where the artist uses drawing as a roadmap—initially as a perceptual tool that facilitates thinking through the piece on an intuitive level, and then as a tool of communication to demonstrate ideas to his creative team. Unlike most sculptors whose monumental works are formed in plaster or clay—the maquette to be later translated into metal by a foundry—Paley conceives and executes each piece in his own studio. Overseeing production, in which each phase can be measured in terms of months or years rather than hours or days, Paley's ability to sustain a creative idea over time has yielded an unparalleled body of metalwork.

The artist acknowledges that the practice of drawing provides him with a better understanding of the evolution of form:

> Drawing, by its very nature, is linear and gestural, so that aspects of movement and plasticity, how metal moves when it's hot...become a part of the composition of the piece itself. I draw with no conscious idea of how I am going to make a piece, none whatsoever, but through the evolution of the design process, these things resolve themselves.[1]

With years of experience making large-scale sculpture, the artist allows himself complete freedom of expression when making these initial sketches; only later will he address more pragmatic concerns.

Paley's facility as a draftsman allows the viewer to witness the development of his ideas as they evolve from concept to three-dimensional form. Fluid and gestural in initial sketches, the graphite images become more controlled, eventually taking the form of completed presentation drawings. Like the architectural process that yields the built environment, progressively more detailed drawings allow the artist and his assistants to work out salient details significant to engineering concerns.



Study for Olympia, 1990
Promenade II Building, Atlanta, Georgia
marker and colored pencil on paper
24 x18"

In Rochester, New York, Albert Paley's drawing room is soundproofed against the constant noise emanating from the adjacent 20,000 square-foot studio. There, he employs eight people, half of whom handle project administration while the other half work on the shop floor. In the past 30 years, the Paley atelier has completed more than 50 site-specific works for corporate headquarters, museums and libraries, and government buildings. For the most part non-figurative, the work, nevertheless, is expressive of the human condition. Paley describes his ironwork as mimicking his feelings, capturing experience in a non-literal manner. Influencing his work is his observation that all life is in motion and constantly changing. His sculpture emotes this same quality, each piece expressing fluidity and plasticity through the natural evolution of form. To overcome the staid quality of larger-than-life sculptures, Paley maximizes the work's implied fluidity, forging steel bars into sinuous lines that move in and around the piece, much like a vine finding its way from darkened forest to sunlight. The motion is not quick, but rather determined and steady, resulting in work that, although massive in its finished form, exhibits a grace of its own.

Influencing his work is his observation that all life is in motion and constantly changing. His sculpture emotes this same quality, each piece expressing fluidity and plasticity through the natural evolution of form.

A flow of line—embedded with emotion—is evident in Paley's earliest drawings. In *Working Sketch for the Hunter Museum Fence, Chattanooga, Tennessee* (1974) and *Proposal Drawing for the Smithson Crypt Gate* (1975) the artist depended upon an Art Nouveau-like rendering and its attendant sinuosity. Drawn elements—horizontal, intertwining, and asymmetrical—appear as organic elements sketched from nature. The development of implied gravitational movement is, perhaps, most evident in a series of drawn studies for *Olympia* (1990), in which the artist inserts a number of horizontal lines that appear to cascade downward along a vertical core. While such implied weightlessness is easy to accept on paper, it remains a challenge to retain such fluid movement in a sculpture that is rigidly fixed in place by its mass and its weight. From an aesthetic point of view, such varied lines contain, compress, and penetrate space, yielding a visual matrix—what Paley calls a "labyrinth of considerations."

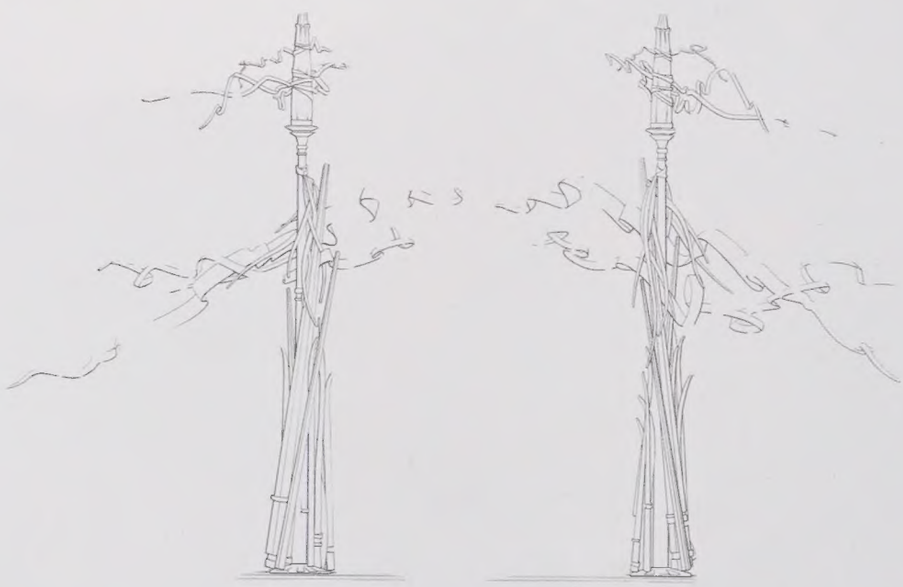
Study for the Renwick Gallery Portal Gates (1972) is the artist's roadmap to developing his first major ironwork, a pair of eight-foot-tall gates for the Smithsonian Institution's museum of twentieth-century and contemporary American craft in Washington, D.C. Completed in 1974, this commission forever changed Paley's artistic direction, and might be said to have transformed the direction of contemporary blacksmithing as well. Prior to that time, Paley worked in what he calls the "noble" metals, the non-ferrous or precious materials of gold, silver, and platinum. His initial approach to this early ironwork was a fusion of elements from his professional training as a goldsmith, yielding an unconventional approach to traditional architectural forms, such as gates and fences. The move from non-ferrous to ferrous metals, as Paley explains it, was a natural evolution of his artistic exploration of material form, not the conceptual jump that many have posited. As a goldsmith, he dealt with similar aesthetic problems, experimenting with various structural systems to create innovative means of connection that allowed the piece to move from concept to physical form. To develop the later steel pieces, Paley continued to work within the confines of his structural systems, utilizing creative joinery applied large.

From Paley's point of view, working in steel and iron was dissimilar from his previous experience with precious metals in one crucial respect. Forming methods used for gold and silver were slow, while ferrous forging appeared immediate and fluid. Steel remains malleable longer provided, of course, that it is hot enough to accept the hammer's blow. For the past three decades Paley has taken advantage of the material's plastic nature,

Sentinel, 2003
Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York
weathering steel, stainless steel, bronze
73 x 30'

Stairway Sculptures, 1987
Wortham Center for the Performing Arts, Houston, Texas
formed and fabricated steel, polychromed
variable height: 15-30'

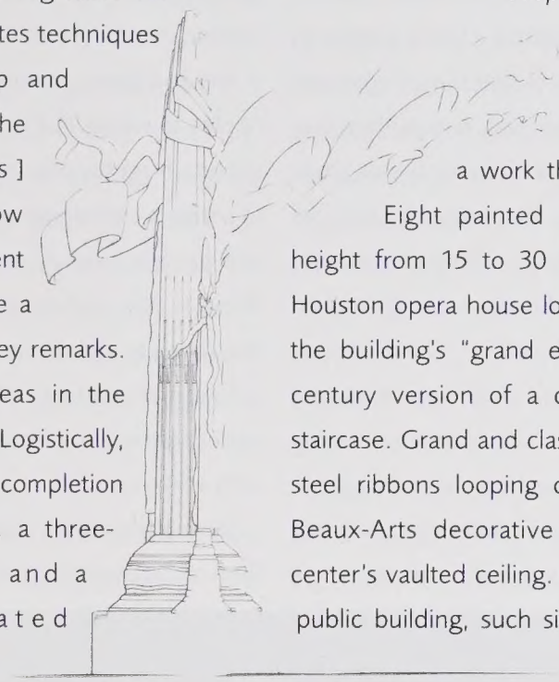
Proposal for a Sculpture, 1985
Wortham Center for the Performing Arts, Houston, Texas
graphite on paper
23 x 29"



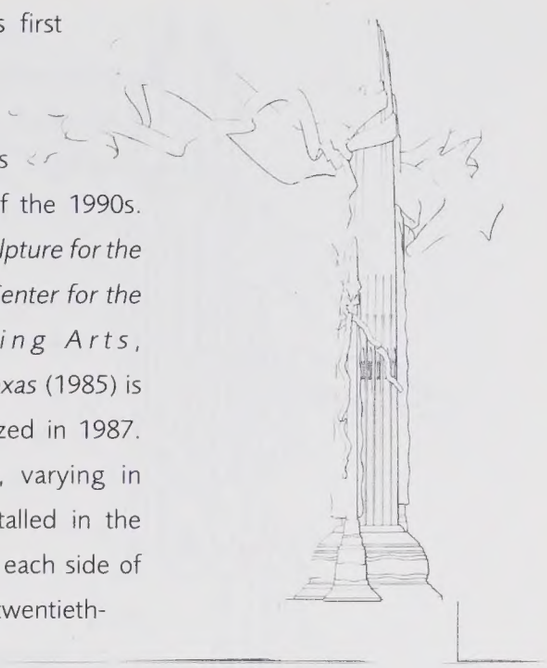
resulting in the massive, site-specific works for which he is known today. His switch from non-ferrous metals permitted him to explore scale, shifting from the intimate, body-level scale of fine jewelry to the body public, the collective space of community. In 2003 Paley completed his largest piece to date, *Sentinel* (2003), a 110-ton, seventy-foot high sculpture for the campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology (R.I.T.), where he holds a Professorship in Contemporary Crafts in the School for American Crafts. The massive form of *Sentinel* is constructed of two types of steel to create contrasting textures and coloration. One section will weather to an aged patina in contrast to another, made from a more visually stable, stainless steel. Bronze elements provide points of accent.

Drawing allows Paley to work faster, making the invisible visible, at least on paper, and affords him the opportunity to more fully develop variations on a theme. Typically, the design development phase of a commission may last for six months, during which time the artist creates a series of more refined drawings. He has described this second series of drawings—those made primarily as tools of communication—as a "feasibility study." No longer sketchy and changing, these more

developed drawings communicate what the piece will look like and how it will function. It is during this period that Paley addresses pragmatic concerns that will lead to actualizing the form; he considers budget and time constraints, evaluates the structure and foundation, organizes his labor force, and reevaluates techniques in terms of craftsmanship and composition. "Basically, [the drawing provides] everything I need to know and everything that the client needs to know to make a decision to go ahead," Paley remarks. "I try to present my ideas in the clearest possible way." Logistically, this results in the eventual completion of a series of drawings, a three-dimensional model, and a computer-generated photomontage.

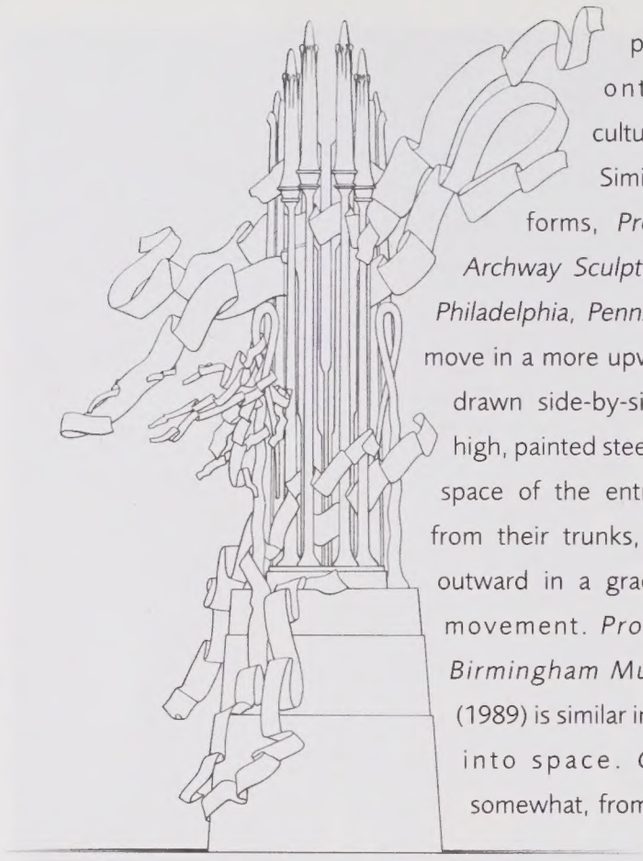


Paley's hallmark ribbon-like forms first appeared during a period of intense production, sandwiched between his earlier gate/screen works of the 1970s and his more mass-like structures of the 1990s. *Proposal for a Sculpture for the Wortham Center for the Performing Arts, Houston, Texas* (1985) is a work that was realized in 1987. Eight painted steel pylons, varying in height from 15 to 30 feet, are installed in the Houston opera house lobby, four on each side of the building's "grand escalator," a twentieth-century version of a classical staircase. Grand and classical it is, with horizontal, steel ribbons looping outward like free-floating Beaux-Arts decorative swags beneath the art center's vaulted ceiling. Installed in a monumental public building, such site-specific work helps re-define contemporary



Proposal for Synergy, 1986
Archway Sculpture for Museum Towers, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
graphite on paper
29 x 23"

Synergy, 1987
Archway Sculpture for Museum Towers, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
formed and fabricated steel, paint
25 x 60 x 6 '



public space, while holding onto references from a cultured past.

Similar in its use of ribbon-like forms, *Proposal for Synergy, an Archway Sculpture for Museum Towers, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania* (1986) begins to move in a more upward direction. Paired and drawn side-by-side, two twenty-five-foot high, painted steel forms frame the negative space of the entry. Extending branch-like from their trunks, large ribbons cantilever outward in a graceful cascade of implied movement. *Proposal for Confluence, Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama* (1989) is similar in its use of ribbons flowing into space. *Confluence* departs, somewhat, from the earlier pieces in that its horizontal elements emanate from a denser vertical core, more firmly rooting the sculpture as an earth-bound object.

"Every piece is a learning experience," Paley explains regarding the reappearance of an element in various sculptures. In the Wortham Center's *Stairway Sculptures*, he first employed the banner or ribbon shape to indicate a baroque trompe l'oeil gesture. He uses this motif again in a recent commission for the St. Louis Zoo. The ribbon form, in the zoo piece, moves out of thin air to become ripples in water. In this current commission, Paley departs from his previous non-figurative approach to create a ceremonial gateway flanked by a jungle and aquatic habitat, each filled with wildlife and flora. In the ribbon-defined space flanking the entranceway, dolphin and all manner of fish swim in a fluid environment. While the motif is similar in each of these two pieces, its interpretation changes with a new context.

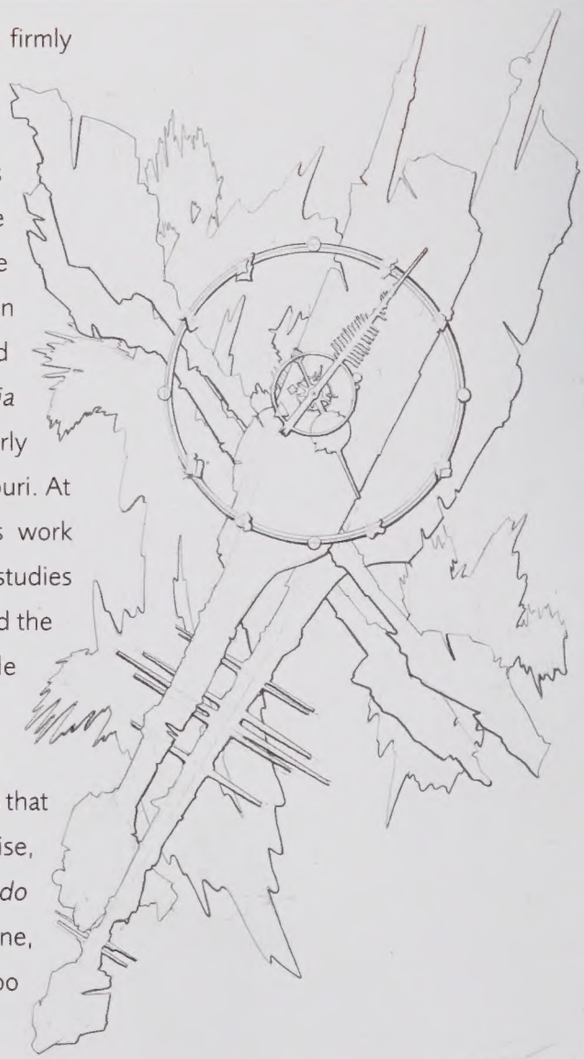
During the 1970s, much of Paley's work took the form of ceremonial gateways; during the 1980s he

"Every piece is a learning experience," Paley explains regarding the reappearance of an element in various sculptures.

above
Proposal for Confluence, 1989
Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama
graphite on paper
29 x 23"

right
Study for a Clock for the Grand Hall, 1992
Orlando Airport, Florida
graphite on paper
24 x 23"

A few of Paley's sculptures and drawings are polychrome, but most rely on the subtle coloration of the metallic palette and the gradations of graphite on paper. Beginning in the 1990s, however, the artist experimented with color and mass, producing *Olympia* (1990) in Atlanta, *Oblique* (2002) in Beverly Hills, and *Cypher* (2002) in Columbia, Missouri. At the end of the twentieth century, Paley's work became more geometric; his proposals and studies for *Olympia* (1990) reveal a tendency toward the totemic, rather than the organic. Multiple proposals for *Centennial Gate, Arizona State University, Phoenix* (1991) reveal a denser construct formed by flattened shapes that have replaced the earlier fluid line. Likewise, study for a *Clock for the Grand Hall, Orlando Airport, Florida* (1992) employs a jagged line, reinforcing the biting edge of time pressed too thin by airport itineraries.



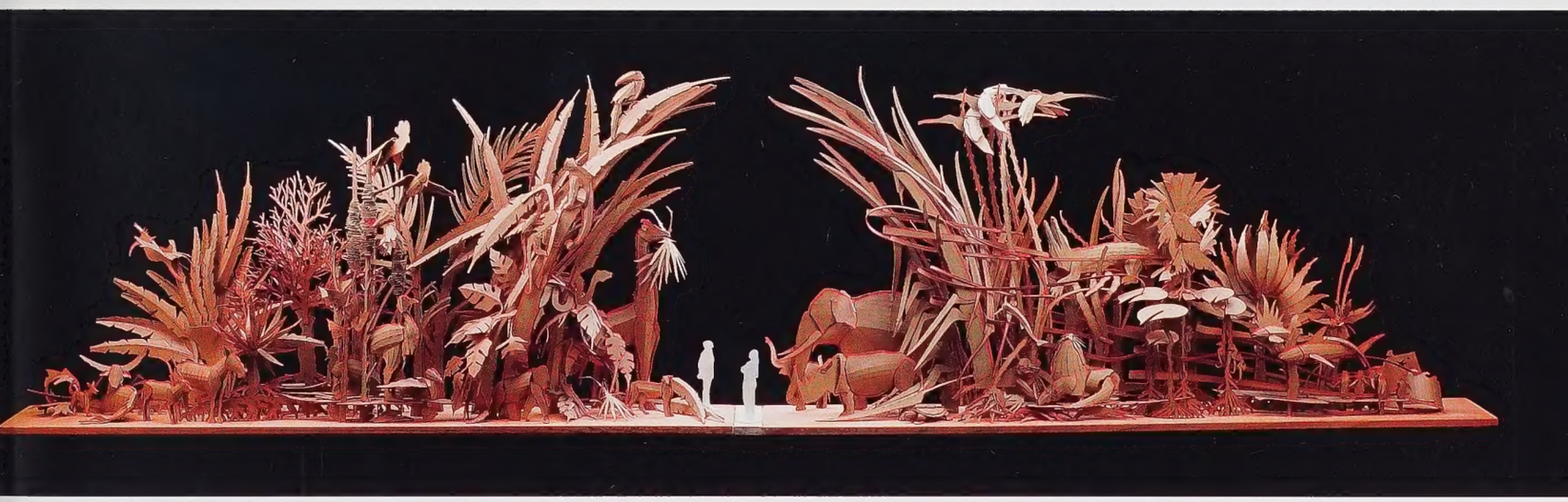
began making freestanding sculptures that soared above the landscape; in the 1990s his work became more totemic. Now in the twenty-first century, Paley appears to be returning to ideas he explored during his first decade of ironwork. He describes the portal as a recurring theme and metaphor in his career:

> When you walk through a gate or portal, there's a transformation that takes place.... It's a perceptual passage, not necessarily a physical passage. Gates become not just something to secure an area; gates are a metaphor. They are the dividing line between the inside and the outside, between light and dark, night and day, life and death and that whole passage we go through in life.

What Albert Paley has done with his own life has defined a persona that looms large on the landscape of American metalsmithing. An active artist for over three decades, Paley began his career with a BFA and MFA from the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, where he focused on jewelry. Working as a goldsmith in the mid 1960s, his successful proposal in the early 1970s propelled his career into an architectural direction. The resultant piece, the Renwick Gallery's *Portal Gates*, would serve as a point of departure for the artist's future work. In the intervening years, *Portal Gates* created an irreversible impact on the field of architectural metalsmithing as well, inspiring young artists to look anew at traditional techniques for making contemporary works. In the decades that followed, the ranks of American metalsmithing swelled, resulting in a growing and vibrant field.

A vigorous interest in American blacksmithing is evident in the expansion of the Artist-Blacksmith's Association of North America, Inc. (ABANA), which claims more than 5,000 members on five continents. At the association's biennial conference, in July 2004, Paley received the coveted Alex Bealer award, named for the association's first president, and author of the *Art of Blacksmithing* (1976). Paley was recognized for his "significant impact and contribution" to the field of blacksmithing, and presenter Dorothy Stiegler noted that the award provides a "quasi-historical perspective, surveying how the field of blacksmithing has progressed, grown, and developed, due to the recipient's efforts."

Albert Paley's sculptures continue to inhabit our public spaces, adding visual interest and wonder to the everyday. Metaphorically, and with grand gestures, the artist marks the parameters of public discourse. On paper, those same defining elements begin to create a repertoire of architectural forms. Some—like gates, screens, and fences—limit our movement. Others—in particular, the ceremonial portals—may open the way to a more civilizing society. ⧗



Proposal for Ceremonial Archway, 2004
St. Louis Zoo, Missouri
cardboard, wood, colored pencil

Anna Fariello is a former Renwick Scholar of American Craft and co-author of *Objects & Meaning: New Perspectives in Art and Craft*.

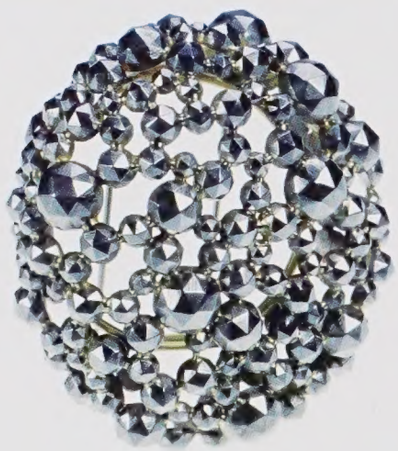
All images courtesy Paley Studios, Ltd., Rochester, New York

[1] All quotations are from an interview with the author on July 7, 2004, in Richmond, Kentucky.

"LOLA BROOKS"

SIENNA GALLERY, LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS
AUGUST 6-31, 2004

by ANDREA DINOTO



Steel has long been a material of choice for a select number of art jewelers working in styles ranging from the neo-primitivism of Tone Vigeland to the geometric modernism of Eva Eisler. But the work of Lola Brooks, which combines steel with gold and rose-cut champagne diamonds, is less easily defined. Meticulously constructed in the grand tradition of *bijouterie*, Brooks's work deliberately evokes antique styles but infuses them with a purely contemporary, almost throwaway, elegance. Underlying the strong visual appeal of this jewelry is Brooks's conceptual agenda. She writes in her statement for the Sienna show, her second at this gallery, that steel connotes "industry, armament, utility, machismo, and the mundane. Diamonds share some of these associations—industry, strength/hardness—but also assume that of rarity, preciousness, status, eternity, and bloodshed." Choosing steel as her dominant material and combining it with diamonds and gold is, for Brooks, a subversive act, or more specifically, "a balancing act between my wish to confound established hierarchies and demonstrate that value is inherent in all materials."

Brooks commits to these ideas with her choice to lavish prodigious fabricating skills on a resistant, superhard base metal, which she transforms into supple, diamond-accented chains and grapelike clusters of steel beads, some as tiny as seed pearls and each minutely hand-faceted. These were on view at the Sienna Gallery, and, together with openwork diamond brooches, ball pendants, earrings, and rings, their construction acknowledges steel's unique historical role in jewelry design.

Brooks is working within a tradition of steel—and iron—jewelry that flourished from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries in England and Central Europe. Faceted steel in imitation of diamonds was first produced in England as costume jewelry.[1] Faceted studs were fastened to steel or tin backplates by means of screws or rivets; buttons and shoe buckles, as well as watch chains, chatelaines, and sword hilts, were among the earliest steel ornaments produced using this method, which eventually gave way to a stamped-out, mass-produced version.[2] This jewelry was distinctly different from the neoclassical Berlin ironwork made by Prussian iron manufactories in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Using a sand-casting method that could reproduce everything from medallions to filigree, the iron factories fabricated elegant jewelry considered both fashionable and tasteful in its rejection of the sumptuous, diamond-laden styles of the eighteenth century. Berlin ironwork became accepted both as mourning jewelry and as an expression of patriotism during Prussia's wars with Napoleon. Donations of gold jewelry to the Prussian war effort were rewarded with iron replacement jewels that bore the inscription, "*Gold gab ich fur Eisen*" ("I gave gold for iron").

When Brooks uses steel as chain link and to simulate faceted jewels, she alludes to these historical antecedents. Her ovoid brooches of faceted steel beads gold-soldered into a rigid network recall eighteenth-century shoe buckles and belt clasps, while spherical diamond pendants, rings, and earrings nod to the various forms of Victorian-era filigree set with brilliants. Brooks's work is in part an ironic updating of past styles. Unlike antique steel jewelry, which was a phenomenon of the Industrial Revolution, hers is purely and identifiably a labor-intensive (to the point of "madness," she says) studio product. A ball pendant requires 200 pieces of steel, and many, many diamonds, in varying sizes, from her "accumulated horde" of antique rose-cut stones, another nod to the past. The resultant "filigree" appears delicate at first glance, but under close scrutiny reveals its muscular construction and formal rigor. That the jewel casually hangs on a bunch of steel chains completes the sort of illusory paradox that is typical of a Brooks piece.

Brooks worked for many years as studio assistant to Gabriella Kiss ("Ted Meuhling's muse") and was inspired by the experience; but she draws a distinction between what she calls the Kiss-Meuhling grounding in "form and beauty" with her own conceptual training at New Paltz. Still, while Brooks says she is "interested in perverting the idea of what jewelry is," she may have outsmarted herself. According to gallery owner Sienna Patti, Brooks's shows virtually sell out to people who generally, one can safely assume, have little or no idea of the complex conceptual agenda that lies beneath the steely luster.

Andrea DiNoto is a New York-based writer who specializes in decorative arts and design.

1 Brigitte Marquardt, "A History of Cast-Iron Jewelry" in *Cast Iron from Central Europe 1800-1850*, Derek E. Ostergard, ed. (The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts with the MAK—Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, 1994), 101-114.

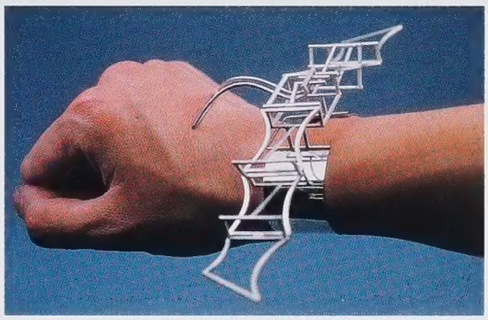
2 Ginny Redington Dawes and Corrine Davidov, *Victorian Jewelry* (Abbeville Press, 1991), 99.

clockwise from top

Cuff, 2003
steel, 18k gold, rose-cut champagne diamonds
2 x 6 1/2"

Pendant, 2003
steel, 18k gold, rose-cut champagne diamonds
pendant diameter 1"

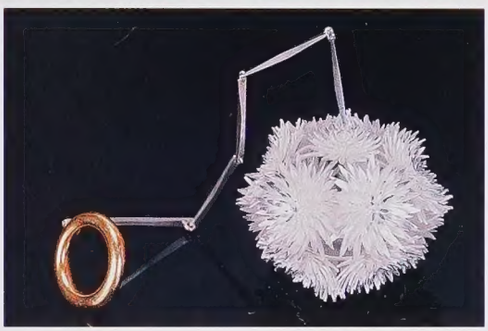
Brooch, 2004
steel, 18k gold
2 x 1 3/4 x 1"



"EMERGING ASIAN AND AMERICAN GOLDSMITHS"

CRAFT ALLIANCE, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
MARCH 19–MAY 16, 2004

by LYNN COOL



Cross-cultural influences in art have been apparent since early human history, and continue to be a phenomenon for modern artists, offering an opportunity for important change. Last spring, Craft Alliance invited Rochester Institute of Technology metals professor Leonard Urso to curate a show representing a multicultural convergence of impressive Asian and American metal art.

Within this exhibition, several themes flow through the work. An architectural focus defines the work of Cappy Counard, Yen Liaung-Chung, Pornipilai Zou Meemalai, and Dukno Yoon. Liaung-Chung's gold wire brooches and rings are rectilinear cage structures that encase pearls and stones. Counard stylishly warps and swells geometric forms. Her works combine precious elements with engineered intricacy: *Niagra*, a gold and silver pendant, features a clever fastening system for its Tahitian pearl; *Bridge Ring's* crescent-shaped, flanged deck features intricate cutwork patterning, and recalls mosque-like forms, heraldry motifs, and hieroglyphics all at once.

Delicate steel and silver works *Self Portrait I, II,* and *III*, by Yoon, displayed within three wall-mounted cases, are a cross between headwear, eyewear, and orthodontic headgear. Photographs of the artist wearing the work illustrate how the pieces move when the wearer talks or gesticulates, but also transform the objects into wearable drawings, interesting juxtapositions of two-dimensional, geometric line onto the rounded, three-dimensional planes of the head and face. Yoon seems to have condensed and also expounded upon the essence of self. His dual works, titled *Wings*, comprise a feathered, tubular framework ring that evoke a flying machine from da Vinci's sketchbook, and a complex, kinetic bracelet that features a winged armature above a wide, flat silver band. Both pieces combine planar, linear, and dimensional form to define negative space and add a feeling of aerodynamics.

Chih-Wen Chiu, Yun-Ryoung Lee, So Young Park, and Jay Song all focus on organic form. The peaks of Chiu's bracelet, *Terrifying Waves*, undulate to embellish the wrist. *Transformation* and *Descendant of the Dragon* wrap around the neck and trail downward with sinuous vertebra of cut and reformed multiple units. Park presents *Nativity*, a large silver pod form encrusted with miniature daps, several of which hold multi-hued pearls. It is not apparent if *Nativity* functions as jewelry; devoid of any obvious fastening, it offers simply curled wire tendrils to embrace the wearer. Park's *Sprouting I* and *Glowing I* also trail and caress the body with vine-like, spiraled wire that terminate with copper and silver ovoid forms, suggesting growth, change, and regeneration. Song's striking "Lantern" rings, each interesting in their variety, feature traditional Asian cultural symbols linked to simple band rings. One imagines the supreme meditative state achieved when the wearer, literally connected to nature, sits in prayer with the revered object in hand, or walks while swaying the pendulant lotus flower or pebble.

Artists Apinya Oo Boonprakob, Juan Carlos Caballero-Perez, Tim Lazure, and Jennifer Townsend focus on a lush presentation of precious materials, sometimes with salvaged or non-precious elements incorporated. Caballero-Perez combines precious materials with superb hollowforming and goldsmithing techniques to deliver works that are absolutely stunning. *Levitation* features a canoe-like form, mysteriously open and topped with a marriage-of-metals pattern in yellow gold and white Palladium. An untitled fine silver and gold spicular neckpiece resembles an elongated primitive tool; Caballero-Perez's gold granules, mabe pearl, and diamond on the reverse side form an interesting counterpoint. More works continue his spicular theme; two brooches incorporate gold wire and fragments of sheets that terminate in pearls and diamonds, resounding with imagery of musical instruments. Finally, Caballero-Perez's "Spear Series" enlarges the spicular forms into imposing body pieces worn slung over one shoulder. Laden with an implied weaponry function, he arms these works with flush set diamonds and hammered, burnished textures—the effect is positively sumptuous, yet their strong abstract quality keeps the viewer focused on form.

This exhibition undeniably includes skilled metalsmiths who produce quality work. However, one might question the appropriateness of the exhibition's title: "Emerging" (half of the artists have been published and are professionally established), and "Goldsmiths" (a misnomer for a show featuring a quantity of silver and other metals). Additionally, there did not appear to be a consistent focus on the influences informing the artists' concerns, styles, and techniques. Artists' statements integrated within the display would have enhanced the viewer's appreciation of the diverse cultural strands behind the work. The value of this exhibition lies in strong work presented within an interesting thematic scenario that, with further exploration, will open new avenues of communication for multicultural artists and their audiences.

Lynn Cool is a metalsmith and writer who lives in Lawrence, Kansas.

clockwise from top left

Cappy Counard
Bridge Ring, 2003
sterling silver, 18k gold
1 1/8 x 1/8 x 3/8"

Juan Carlos Caballero-Perez
Untitled (necklace), 2003
fine silver, 18k, 22k gold, mabe pearl, diamond
6 x 1 1/2 x 1/2"
Photo: Dan Nueberger

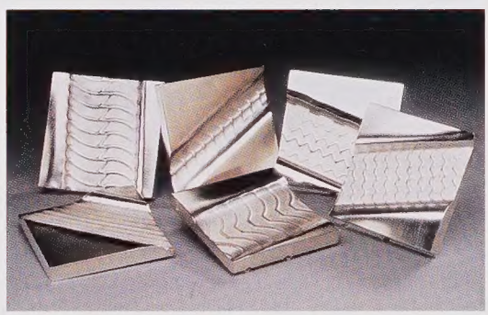
Dukno Yoon
Wings Bracelet, 2002
sterling silver, stainless steel wire
4 x 3 1/2 x 2 3/4"

Jay Song
Lantern Ring #1, 2004
sterling silver, gold foil
5 3/4 x 2 x 2"
Photo: Taweesak Molsawat

"BORIS BALLY: URBAN ENAMELS"

FULLER CRAFT MUSEUM,
BROCKTON, MASSACHUSETTS
MAY 14-AUGUST 29, 2004

by PATRICIA HARRIS and DAVID LYON



There's no question that recycled traffic signs point out the current direction of Boris Bally's career, and a wall-mounted somersault of chairs made from highway markers certainly dominated this exhibition at the Fuller Craft Museum. But a series of small glass cases sampled Bally's less rowdy—and in some respects more conventional—work in precious metals, and highlighted his longstanding fascination with the urban environment.

Bally's 1993 four-piece place setting of *Trussware*, for example, is modeled on a bridge truss he saw in the wreckage of the 1989 San Francisco earthquake. The *X-Panded Flatware* (1994) mimics both patterns of perforation on rusted metal as well as the peek-a-boo distortions of chain-link fence. Bally's technique, including the repetitive piercing and controlled stretching of the silver for the *X-Panded* series, is meticulous.

For his "Tread Wear" series of silver jewelry from the mid 1990s, Bally claims to have documented more than 100 tire tread patterns. He eventually reproduced about 20 tracks in silver, essentially equating the metal with a muddy road. By posing the question of where the tracks lead, these images engage the imagination. At the same time, the down-in-the-dirt subject matter challenges conventional notions of preciousness.

Judging from this exhibition, Bally's heart belongs to scrap, or, more specifically, to the semiotic detritus of the urban landscape. His transfigured road signs have the raw energy and visceral appeal of trash treated as treasures. Bally has dubbed the material "urban enamels" because glass dust is embedded in the enamel paint on the aluminum signs. And he employs their strident colors and reflective surfaces as if they were giant, flat jewels.

His "DPW Bowls" and "Transit Chairs" are fashioned from recycled traffic signs that have been pressed, cut, riveted, and/or spun into new forms that simultaneously highlight the surprising beauty of mundane materials and restate the directives that the original signs were intended to impart. By literally twisting everyday imagery to his own ends, Bally revitalizes the one-trick pony of Pop Art by not merely celebrating the popular culture artifact in isolation, but by adding layers of meaning and vectors of intent.

The DPW Bowls take an ingenuous tack on traffic graphics by isolating the central image—a stick-man pedestrian, a turn arrow with a diagonal bar through it, a silhouette profile of a rider on horseback—and removing it from its roadside context. In this regard, Bally seems to be following the well-blazed trail of Pop Art predecessors. But unlike them, he uses the actual "found" object as the material for his art, reshaping it to a more graceful form and thereby redeeming the metal without markedly distorting the original graphic.

Bally made his first bowls by raising the form on a stake, a technique he learned while working with precious metals. He still raises a few bowls each year, but it is a slow process because he cannot anneal the aluminum without scorching the paint. As an alternative, he invests his artistry in the selection and isolation of the image from the tons of scrap signs he picks over each year, and jobs out the bowls to an aluminum spinner working to his specifications. The art lies in the vision, not necessarily in the labor.

The bowls have an engaging naivete; they celebrate our common graphic language by slowly turning over its syllables. While presenting a streamlined, almost minimalist profile, the Transit Chairs are more complex, both in form and content. They are composed of carefully crafted interlocking pieces, many of which are cut from large signs and then bent at precise angles to both shape the functional parts and highlight aspects of the material's original graphic content. Most of the chairs are constructed primarily from a single sign (or signs of the same style and color), then embellished with a piece from a contrasting sign. Each stands on casters of champagne corks—a whimsically incongruous conjunction of luxury and junk.

This is deconstruction at its purest, but rather than a strict homage to the original, it is an act of subversion. Bally flouts the authority behind the signs—those directives that instruct us to turn here, not park there, watch out for schoolchildren or farm machinery. He defangs the inherent authoritarianism of the signs by divesting them of their literal meaning to focus instead on their joyous colors and rigorous geometry.

Critics and writers **Patricia Harris** and **David Lyon** live in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

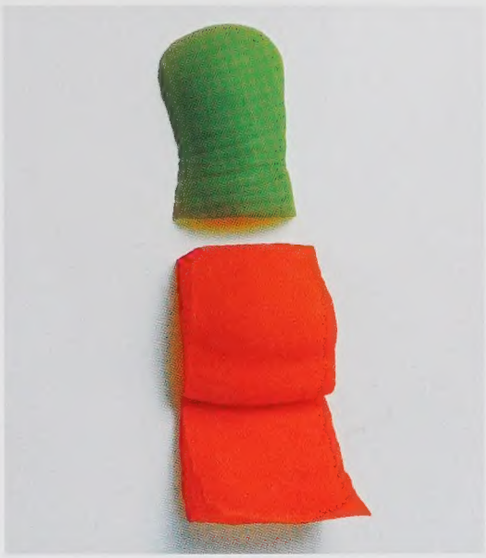
clockwise from top

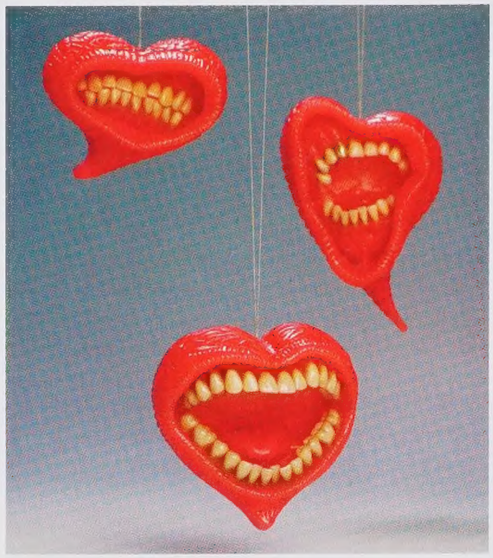
Urban Enamel Platters, 2001
re-used street signs, aluminum, copper rivets
diameter 16" and 25 1/2"
Photo: Dean Powell

Tread Wear Brooches, 1995
silver, stainless steel pins
each 2 1/4 x 2 1/4 x 3/8"
Photo: Dean Powell

Installation view, "Boris Bally: Urban Enamels," Fuller Craft Museum, 2004

X-Panded Flatware, 1994
silver, gold plate
Photo: Dean Powell





"CORPORAL IDENTITY: BODY LANGUAGE"

MUSEUM OF ARTS & DESIGN, NEW YORK
NOVEMBER 14, 2003–JUNE 4, 2004

by TONI GREENBAUM

As Ulrich Schneider, Director of the Museum für Angewandte Kunst (Frankfurt) and Stefan Soltek, Director of the Klingspor Museum Offenbach, state in their foreword to the catalogue accompanying "Corporal Identity: Body Language": "This [exhibition] is not the usual survey of the body in art history, but an unveiling of a whole world of aspects associated with corporeality itself." It is a multimedia show, including works in ceramics, glass, wood, metal, fiber, and mixed media. Of the 200 objects, about 50 are in the jewelry format. The most compelling pieces speak not only to the human psycho-social condition but also to the physicality of the mortal machine itself, referencing the inside of the body, extending or replacing body parts, and even creating vestiges where the body or its components once were. Some build upon concepts begun in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. All force us to reconsider in new and jarring ways the structure that houses our being.

This wonderfully outrageous exhibition is divided into four basic themes: The Nature of Identity; The Body as Vessel and the Body in Fragments and Traces; The Biological Body; and Designs from the Body and for the Body. It is immediately apparent that most pieces fall into several of the elastic categories; therefore, the best way to approach them is singly. In fact, the strength of this formidable array is not so much thematic (although organization is helpful in navigating its complexities) but in the individual pieces themselves.

Several works explore the body's interior, perhaps not as radically as Peter Skubic's surgically implanted *Jewelry Under the Skin* from 1975, but with insight and intelligence nonetheless. Julia Barello's *Vascular Studies II: Lung Blood Brooch*, a sterling silver model of the actual blood vessels above which it is meant to be worn, seeks to render the internal anatomy visible, further detailing the relationship between the inner and outer portions of the body. Barello displays the brooch upon an x-ray of her chest—a site-specific background where the piece is meant to rest when off the body. Peter Bauhuis's silver "Heart" brooches also reference the chest cavity. Here, the entire organ in miniature, replete with silver wire "arteries" threaded throughout the reverse, is worn on the outside of the body, symbolizing strength as well as the "center of feelings." The most unsettling work in this category is Bruce Metcalf's *Man in Bloom*, which depicts a major surgical procedure whose subject is splayed out upon an operating table. The open body, from which beautiful flowers grow, is created from precious materials, such as gold and pearls, creating a startling contradiction between the content and mode of presentation.

The body's outer layer is investigated with equal social, psychological, and scientific probing. Katinka Kaskeline seeks to erase the boundaries between jewelry and skin with *Stigmata*, a set of color-printed "wound" tattoos, meant to transfer onto the skin's surface. Victoria Wittek enables body parts to be manipulated "beneath the skin." She sinks fluttering doll eyes into large, circular silver pendants, and encases their appendages within flexible latex membranes. Esther Bott's "Body Brooches," solid-cast from brightly colored silicone rubber, recall Gerd Rothmann's studies of the cracks, crevices, and wrinkles found in the human structure's private places. The exaggerated three-dimensionality and hot, neon colors of the former, however, remove them from the realm of reality, and where Rothmann's casts are recognizable and specific, Bott's are vague and enigmatic, couched as they are within hefty plastic chunks that provide only hints of the anatomy they represent.

Throughout history, artists have used the vessel as a metaphor for the body. Jamie Bennett devised a means to present his jewelry physically and sensually, as well as visually, in the "Body and Bottle" series (ca. 1985). Here urn-like figures and figure-like urns of expressionistically painted and brightly colored enamel alternate statements about the outer shape versus the inner workings of the human frame. Therese Hilbert's matte silver brooches, *Hollow But Not Empty*, exist as three-dimensional forms suggesting human organs, each penetrated by orifices that "allude to an inner life to which direct access is never granted."

This is an intense exhibition, but what saves it from being morose is the sardonic humor sprinkled throughout, such as Jiro Kamata's "Ear Plug" brooches, which inversely use a banal object—yellow plastic ear plugs—repetitively, in a decorative format; and a set of pins by Wolfgang Lieglein, *Morgenglatten* (Ostentatio genitalium), made from commercial plastic doorbell nameplates stamped with numbers indicating the male wearer's supposed penile dimensions. Though decidedly macabre, Johannes Oppermann's huge, brain-like pendants, shaped like fleshy pink "hearts" fitted with gaping tooth-lined mouths posed in gruesome grins, fall somewhere between horror and fun. They, like the rest of the pieces in "Corporal Identity," celebrate humanity, warts and all.

Toni Greenbaum is a New York City-based art historian, specializing in twentieth- and twenty-first-century jewelry and metalwork.

clockwise from top left
Therese Hilbert
Hollow But Not Empty (brooch), 2002
silver
diameter 2"

Esther Bott
Bodies (brooches), 2002
silicone rubber, colored, solid-cast

Johannes Oppermann
Pendants, from the "Hearts Series," 2001/2003
cast polymer plastic, steel rope
5 1/2 x 3 3/8 x 2"
4 x 4 x 1 5/8"
4 x 3 x 1 1/2"

Victoria Wittek
Body Toys I & II: Jewelry, 2003
silver, gold, latex, Ölabstreifring, steel cable, window frame paint, C2, doll's eye
1 3/8 x 3 3/8"

"JOYAS JÓIAS: THE NEW JEWELRY FROM LATIN AMERICA"

VELVET DA VINCI GALLERY,
SAN FRANCISCO
SEPTEMBER 1-30, 2004

by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

A refreshing wind from the pampas swept into San Francisco with the work of 14 artists from Argentina, joined by another 18 from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. After two years of searching, gallery owners Mike Holmes and Elizabeth Shypertt assembled a welcome exhibition by jewelers whose works are rarely seen north of the border. Forget any lingering memories of traditional Mexican silver, Colombian emeralds, or gold llamas: this new work showed many different contemporary styles, and many of the pieces displayed a high fashion IQ, combining flair and boldness with excellent craftsmanship and unusual materials.

Five Argentinian artists made some of the strongest fashion statements. Susana de Muro collaborated with British glassmakers Adam Aaronson and Paul Bloom to create two enormous blown glass and sterling neckpieces, wonderful for a cocktail party but too heavy for longer wear. Daniela Schwartz made equally striking, but featherweight, cuffs in knitted wool on a simple, clean sterling frame, and a companion wool choker with a cross-stitch sterling closure. Maria Molinelli Wells also made cuffs and neckpieces in silver and interchangeable long-haired sheep or goatskin straps. Mariana Sammartino pleated fine-grained, light-grey stainless steel mesh into elegant pins and cuffs, ornamenting them with tiny diamonds, and a lacy black wire choker decked with gold spangles.

Huge, but wearable, fashion bracelets were made by Aurorisa Mateo (Puerto Rico), who first CAD-designed them, then used an industrial, laser-driven process to craft them in white plastic. A laser was also used by Claudia Vallejo (Colombia) to make perfectly cut bracelets inspired by pre-Colombian tools and designs. At the opposite end of the spectrum were the delicate, orchid-like rings and necklaces made by Mónica Pérez (Chile) in silver, enamel, and dyed horsehair.

A top prize for versatility should go to Paulo Segatto (Brazil), who combined high-level goldsmithing skills, his country's native minerals such as watermelon tourmaline and rutilated quartz, and the creative recycling opportunities from his parents' ostrich farm. His work included a carnival-perfect ring in rhodium-plated silver and ostrich feathers, a neckpiece in plated silver and bezel-set ostrich leather, and a gold cocktail ring with a mouthwatering slice of rutilated quartz rimmed in diamonds.

Several of the artists liked to work in woven metal—creating not just the usual chains or finely wrought "metal-as-fabric" styles of some U.S. artists, but often heavier and more primitive pieces. Notable examples were the rings, earrings, and chokers made by Patricia Gurgel Segrillo (Brazil), which had the rough charm of miniature mummy bundles about to unwrap. The primitive look also appeared in several "barbarian" silver rings made by Susanna Ditisheim (Argentina) and two bronze and enamel rings by Nicholás Estrada (Colombia).

Other artists focused on showcasing their traditional goldsmithing skills. Maria de los Angeles Matos (Puerto Rico) crafted elegantly kinetic rings, earrings, and pin-pendants in gold, silver, and stones. Aurorisa Mateo (Puerto Rico) alternated between fashion plastic and acrylic and classic sterling and gold rings, some set with small diamonds, others featuring moveable parts.

Of course, there were some forgettable pieces. There was also some of the handsome limited production work you might see at any major U.S. craft show. The best examples came from the Mexican artists: Agnes Seebass, using silver and bi-metal; the organic designs of Eduardo Rubio-Arzate; and Marco Huizar's mixed media pieces combining sterling, 22k gold and such varied materials as recycled tortoise shell, metorite, native wood, and plated guitar strings.

There was less social commentary than one might expect from artists whose countries suffer from acute economic malaise, war, political turmoil, and the ongoing grief of the families mourning their "disappeared." One exception was Nicolás Estrada, who lives in the capital of Colombia's drug trade, and created two protective necklaces in the milagros tradition, but featuring tiny handguns, or clasped hands, guns and knives, and a crucifix. Two of his other pieces showed a lighter side: a "Northern Lights" pendant in silver vegetable ivory, and a "Bright Star" pendant in silver and a giant seed, both illuminated by switchable electric components. Another social commentator was Francisca Kweitel (Argentina), who produced several "message" pins on war and its aftermath, two of which included bullets.

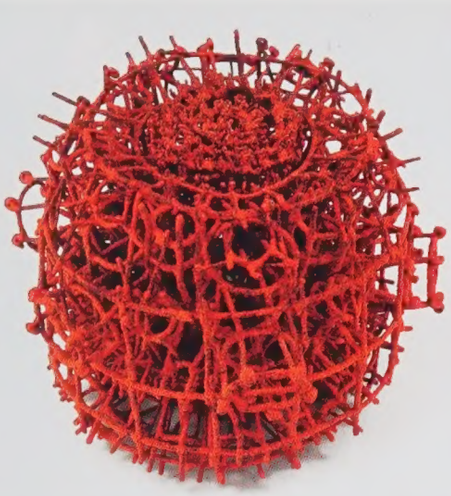
While this show offered only a limited sampling of Latin American jewelry, with a large number of countries unrepresented, it was a laudable start that spotlighted an exciting and unfamiliar source of good contemporary jewelry. The gallery reports that several additional artists have expressed interest in being included in a second show. Let's hope there will be an encore.

Jennifer Cross Gans is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.

clockwise from top left
Daniela Schwartz
Bracelet, 2004
sterling silver, wool
diameter 9"

Mariana Sammartino
City Lights (brooch), 2004
steel mesh, diamonds, 18k gold
5 x 1 1/2"

Nicolás Estrada
Massacre (necklace), 2003
sterling silver, 18k gold
length 22"



"DORIS BETZ: SLOW SENSATION"
MARCH 26-APRIL 16, 2004

"BETTINA DITTLMANN: IN WALD=FOREST"
JUNE 11-JULY 2, 2004

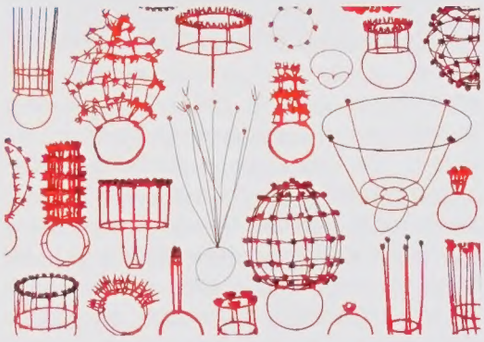
JEWELERS'WERK GALERIE,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

by MARJORIE SIMON

Objectivity is dead. From cable news to *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the hot intellectual currency today is partisanship. In the spirit of the times, this reviewer renounces all objectivity in reporting on new work by Bettina Dittlmann and Doris Betz. Both graduates of the famed Munich academy, the virtual jewelry laboratory generated by Hermann Jünger and presided over by Otto Künzli, Dittlmann and Betz demonstrate a confident insouciance with materials and a knowing nonchalance with design. Both probe the expressiveness of the line and both refer to nineteenth-century German jewelry design.

A visit to Jewelers'werk Galerie became necessary after seeing Dittlmann's enameled brooches at SOFA/New York, where they were nearly dwarfed by the forms and colors of other edgy, lyrical, or aggressive work in the Jewelers'werk booth. In the tiny gallery each of Dittlmann's pieces is isolated in a way that makes it possible to focus on its objectness and look at its miraculous construction, often consisting of a myriad of wire fragments prong-set with tiny garnets in a Bohemian confection. Displayed on what look like illuminated doilies, the eye-popping red- and orange-dusted scribbles have a powerful physicality, evoking images somewhere between a hedgehog and a cupcake.

As seen in the 1998 exhibition "MicroOrganism," Doris Betz draws with wire. In six years her work has become less fussy, more



spare and elemental. Kandinsky once likened a length of a line to a "concept of time," stating, "The more animated the curved line becomes, the longer is the span of time it represents."[1] Betz takes the viewer on a wire journey, as the eye travels along the dark silver lines. Her gravity-defying adornments in three dimensions, reminiscent of Reiko Ishiyama's springy brooches and bracelets, seem to be not so much about space as about air. They recall a 1997 brooch by Georg Dobler or the textured wires of Biba Schutz. By contrast, Dittlmann uses line to create open planes, as a geodesic dome creates volume.

Betz has included some new work that is as light as it is large. Pins glitter like pyrite but turn out to be very thin sheet acrylic. Forms "capture" the surface, as if in motion. They are pierced, bent so that the fractured surface sparkles, edged in grainy color. Front and back play off each other. Sewing a perforated acrylic sheet onto a metal frame, or wire-wrapping minerals on a "charm bracelet" would be "crafty" in lesser hands. Instead, such techniques seem simple and direct, with the kind of control that comes from a goldsmith's training: the earwire fits tightly. Like the combination of acrylic and gems now favored by Helen Britton and David Bielander, Betz uses obviously dyed pearls in garish colors, conflating old and very new.

The image chosen for Dittlmann's postcard, a blurry close-up of a brooch, suggests atomic or celestial regression to infinity, like garnet sprouts reaching for the sky. The three-dimensional iron wire brooches have clearly evolved out of Dittlmann's previous work in the same medium, but they are more elaborately constructed, as if they balloon into being, swollen and shimmering. The scumbled wire fans out perfectly without being symmetrical. In their own way they are as obsessively repetitious and detailed as Giovanni Corvaja's more refined architecture. They are all about jewelry, continuing to point to the black, iron wirework typical of Victoriana, but with a Bavarian variation using indigenous garnets.

Where does this work fit under the crowded umbrella of jewelry's meaning: in the public domain, in museum collections, or the private, as personal adornment, or a family heirloom? Dittlmann's obvious ties to the history of jewelry suggest both public and private: her works belong in the type of collection, like the Romanov's, that ends up in a museum, as well as in your grandmother's jewelry collection that's kept in the family. Betz's recent work focuses more on drawing, on animating the line, whereas some of her earlier work was more about conventional adornment. She begins with a principle of design and brings it to the body. Dittlmann reaches into the history of jewelry and grounds the contemporary by showing its roots. But the work of both artists is clearly about something. The depth of each is revealed in repetition—repetition of fabrication (dominance and confidence) and of examination. Especially in Betz's case, the narrow focus concentrates the inquiry. Dittlmann's work has deepened over time and, in the context of this exhibition, she appears to have taken the greater risks.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith and writer based in New Jersey.

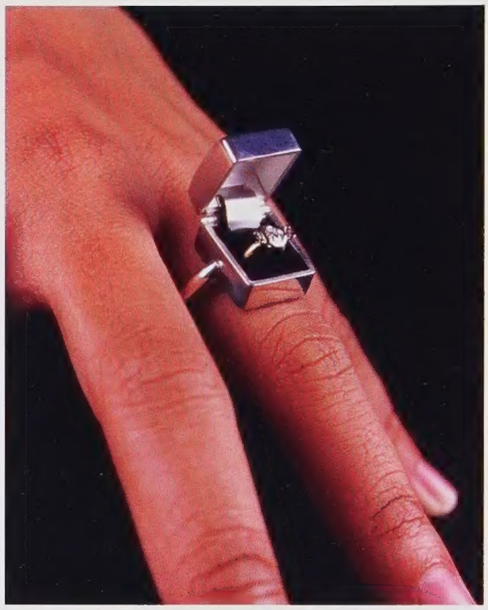
[1] Wassily Kandinsky, *Point and Line to Plane* (New York: Dover Publications, 1979. Originally published in 1947), 98.

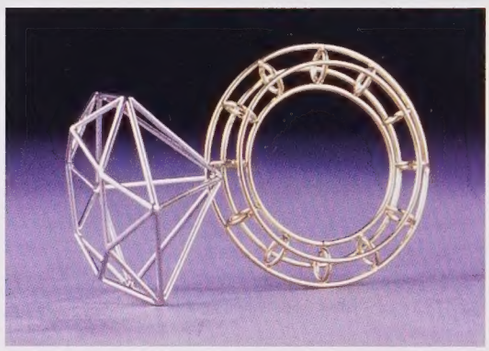
clockwise from top
Bettina Dittlmann
Brooch, 2004
iron, enamel
2 3/8 x 2 3/8 x 2 3/4"

Doris Betz
Brooch, 2003
chromium, pyrit, glass pearls
diameter 2 3/4"
Photo: B. Schweiz

Bettina Dittlmann
Rings, 2004
iron, enamel

Doris Betz
Untitled, 2003
silver
length 15 1/2"
Photo: B. Schweiz





"GREG SIMS ... A FAMILIAR RING"

ANNA LEONOWENS GALLERY, HALIFAX
JUNE 7-19, 2004

by SEAN FLINN

In Halifax, Canada's biggest cultural center on the country's east coast, spring brings wedding parties back to the city's downtown Public Gardens for well-orchestrated photo sessions. It's a common scene many Haligonians walk past quickly, while visitors often stop to gaze and smile.

Last year, jewelry artist Greg Sims, who also teaches at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, displayed within this context a brilliant exhibit mining the meanings of the diamond engagement ring. A timely and wise choice: the diamond engagement ring is the item at the heart of the wedding tableau. The ring's high social and economic value persists. It has lasted generations and will continue to play an important role in cultural history and business.

Sims explores the historical, cultural, and economic significance of the diamond engagement ring with 25 creations that question its iconic status. He crafts rings that are wearable in one way or another, with each underscoring and, indeed, undermining values our society attaches to the diamond ring—size, material (metals and stone), monetary value, and gender roles (the man gives, the woman receives).

The idea of size is well examined in a number of Sims's pieces. The best execution is *Wire Frame Diamond Ring*, composed of laser welded strands of 18k gold—the artist pays close attention to creating pieces of real value themselves—and platinum. Outlined in the strands, the ring's size is amplified, almost cartoonish. It's a playful but sharp poke at dimensionality and how it mediates our sense of love and commitment—the bigger the rock, the bigger the love, as it is often said. The ring's "stone" is attached by a small loop, allowing the stone to flop around as if it's too big to stand upright.

Along with size, Sims plays up the value of the stone itself in *Diamond Sieve Ring–1 Carat +*. This work showcases the quiet, wry humor of the artist. Imagine owning a ring that allowed you to test the size of the stone given you; anything smaller than one karat falls out. When you come upon the plinth displaying this ring you can't help but laugh out loud. There are tiny diamonds scattered on the black velvet, discarded as inferior, while a couple stones still remain in the casing. A spring hinge allows the casing to be opened to place the stones; once closed the test is conducted.

Gold cannot be ignored in a show like this and Sims uses it often, including in *Ringbox Engagement Ring*, which includes both yellow and white gold. The work is a study in the gestures and roles meted out by the giving of a diamond engagement ring. Stereotypically, we envision a man on bended knee, one hand holding up the plush box to his beaming bride-to-be. Here, the spring-activated box replica set on the actual, wearable ring opens and closes, giving the wearer the ability to replay the action—the grand unveiling—over and over.

Sims's conceptual gestures are deceptively simple. His moves are not over-the-top. He shows, doesn't tell, or browbeat. The didactic labels for each piece are typed on a standard appraisal form used by jewelers, further skewering the industry.

Perhaps the only weakness in the show is the one good idea that was not fully executed. The exhibition is installed in the manner of a retail store with each ring displayed in a case atop plinths that approximate counter-top level, making you the "shopper." A spinning vertical display, the kind seen in all manners of retail outlets, bears the name Ace Diamonds. Inside the showcase Sims offers gold and diamond jewelry—puffed hearts among them—at reduced prices. The "sell" and the trade aspect comes across but leaves one wondering whether it's supposed to be a thread for the entire show: are we in an imagined jewelry shop, the kind found in the Jewelry Quarter in Birmingham, England, where Sims studied at the renowned School of Jewelry?

The exhibition hints at the rich history behind the diamond engagement ring, touching on the Hope Diamond briefly, and offering some political undertones on diamond mining and the issue of "blood diamonds." Such references hopefully indicate that there is more to come from Sims on this subject.

Sean Flinn is a freelance arts writer living in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

clockwise from top left
Ringbox Engagement Ring, 2002
sterling silver, 18k white and yellow gold, diamond, foam, spring
3/4 x 1 1/8"

Diamond Sieve Ring-1 Carat +, 2003
sterling silver, loose cubic zirconia
1 x 1 1/2"

Wire Frame Diamond Ring, 2003
18k gold, platinum wire
1 x 1 1/2"

"TEA AND COFFEE TOWERS"

CRANBROOK ART MUSEUM,
BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN
JUNE 5–AUGUST 15, 2004

by SUSAN HOLT

Alberto Alessi, the Italian manufacturer, describes the tea and coffee set as "...one of the typological archetypes of the domestic world: a suite of small objects impregnated with ancient rituals, which in the twentieth century had become a favored topos for many architects," and quite a few metalsmiths as well. In 1983 Alessi invited architects to design sets under the theme "Tea and Coffee Piazza." These were ultimately realized in silver by artisans in Alessi's technical facility as limited editions of no more than 99 copies and three author's proofs. Twenty years later the concept was revisited by Alessi, this time as "Tea and Coffee Towers," with a new group of architectural talent and similar production limits. The show, consisting of 20 tea and coffee sets, was first seen as variously expanded prototypes in "City of Towers" at the 2002 biennial of architecture in Venice. The final designs, in sterling silver, ceramic, glass, thermoplastic resin, and a variety of other materials, are here shown in vitrines as product design and, only peripherally, as metalsmithing.

The sets are all functional in the utilitarian sense, although first impressions often suggest otherwise. The most successful pieces are those that share some design qualities with the familiar and allow the viewer to understand them

operationally without actually handling the objects. The *Fruit Basket* by SANAA is exemplary. Their concept, designed to "make people happier at table," consists of 10 polished pear-like vessels of various sizes and functions sitting in a shallow bowl/tray. All aspects of classical tea and coffee sets are present but dissolve into infinite reflections of each other and the ambient lighting. The effect is startlingly beautiful and unexpected. Likewise, *The Family*, by Dezso Ekler, and the folded design by Fuksas and Mandrelli are surprising but functionally transparent. Each relies on flawlessly crafted sterling surfaces for much of their visual impact.

At the other extreme are visually dazzling pieces whose functions are obscured. UN Studio's silver pods floating over an undulating golden tray, the "futuristic," brightly colored glass set by Future Systems, and Greg Lynn FORM's subtly convoluted flower shapes in the familiar hues of anodized titanium all announce themselves as initially computer-designed, as opposed to those sets developed from a material starting point. Eventually, this distinction will be irrelevant but craft at least is still grappling with the tension.

Especially interesting in this regard are the sets by Morphosis, described as a "three part delivery system," and by Zaha Hadid labeled "a table sculpture." Both consist of devilishly complex organic shapes most easily imagined with the aid of sophisticated software. They were fabricated in silver by master smiths who sometimes struggled to realize the required forms. The hand of the maker manifests itself as imperfections, as craft not quite able to keep pace with technology.

Relatively few of the architects took the tower theme literally but those who did had some of the most striking pieces. Denton Corker Marshall ultimately envisioned parts of their set in an urban

landscape. The individual serving pieces resemble canted smokestacks or cooling towers. Fabricated in polished black silver with chartreuse thermoplastic handles, the set's dubious functionality is trumped by elegant design. Gary Chang's silver and red clay *Kung-Fu Tea Set* is equally towering and architectural.

The show's diversity makes for a revealing if uneven and sometimes unsettling experience. A few sets are more up-scale home-store than visionary. The ubiquity of thermoplastics suggests a material-of-the-moment fixation. Too much of the work is functionally opaque without further information from the catalogue, which in turn has so manipulated the objects' digital photographs that all material distinctions are obliterated.

More consequential, perhaps, are questions about the purpose and nature of these tea and coffee sets. What meaning is carried if the displayed object, originally intended to convey traditions of taste or wealth or ritual, is no longer recognized for what it is or was? Has it, in fact, become "table sculpture" or perhaps "sculpture at table?" And, if so, within which context or discourse should it be evaluated? The limited edition, handcrafted industrial object is a conundrum. It confuses our assumptions. It may also portend the future: a return of the anonymous artisan, a re-privileging of the author over the maker. To what extent this is a consequence of the industrial inception of this project or an emerging trend is difficult to discern, but the show itself is an impressive display of that particular paradigm.

Susan Holt is an artist and metalsmith teaching at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, Michigan.

clockwise from top left
Kazuyo Sejima, SANAA
Tea Set, 2003
silver
teapot: 5 x 5 1/4 x 4 1/4"

Zaha Hadid
Tea and Coffee Set, 2003
silver
teapot: 1 1/2 x 15 x 5 3/4"

Morphosis
Tea Set, 2003
silver
teapot: 4 1/4 x 16 1/2 x 6"

Denton Corker Marshall
Tea and Coffee Set, 2003
silver, thermoplastic resin coating
teapot with base: 7 3/4" x 10 1/4 x 4 1/4"

All photos Carlo Lavatori, courtesy Max Protetch Gallery, New York

"SILKE SPITZER"

ORNAMENTUM, HUDSON, NEW YORK
AUGUST 7-26, 2004

by ANDREA DINOTO

German artist Silke Spitzer traveled to New York's Hudson Valley last summer to spend three months as artist-in-residence at Ornamentum, a year-old art-jewelry gallery offering cutting-edge work in all media by an international roster of designers. Spitzer's show of jewelry, objects, drawings, writings, and paintings demonstrated a rare and delightful originality springing from one artist's intensely personal and poetic response to her environment—everything from the plane she flew in on to the barns she observed in the countryside to her own two hands. The multimedia show was felicitously laid out as a gestalt of sorts in which Spitzer's creative process was made transparent. The viewer was often able to see how a fully realized form, such as wings, had evolved from a meditation on "the idea of wings...the poetic idea of two sides deciding to go on a journey together" and how this idea of lightness and movement evokes a "strong longing for something stable"—hence "bold metal rings with houses as tops." Through lists of favorite things or intensely focused paragraphs ruminating on, say, the shape of a cup, Spitzer conveyed her need to communicate her feelings about life and everyday objects, and about the ways in which notions of expectancy, duality, and the "beauty of repetition" inform her work.

A striking wall display of white paper cutouts of curvaceous, abstract forms—airplanes (inspired by her flight to New York), wings, horses, perhaps flowers—illustrated one of the ways in which Spitzer approaches design. The cutout assemblage was itself a work of art, but we also saw the shapes rendered in titanium as necklace, earring, and brooch elements. The negative cutouts were saved and trimmed to a uniform small-page size and bound together as a book of artfully accidental "holes" that Spitzer found too lovely to discard.

While Spitzer herself characterizes these forms as "cartoonlike," the resultant jewelry is boldly graphic—and, in the case of her *Wings* necklace of nesting, graduated wing forms, even iconic. The pieces take full advantage of the metal's strength and light weight, even its auditory, tinkling wind-chime-like quality.

But the cutouts are only one aspect of Spitzer's virtuoso presentation of multiple artistic personalities. A *Kiss* necklace is made of hundreds of tiny, nesting silver cups that form a snakelike, spinal articulation. Yet another necklace is built from tubular, roughly soldered, blackened metal beads that are actually "cans" resembling the beat-up aluminum variety you might toss in the recycle bin. Stringing them on rough cord, Spitzer once again succeeds in poeticizing the commonplace. Works in silver and, to a lesser extent, gold, tomback, and cast iron demonstrate the full range of her stylistic messaging—"always respecting what the metal wants and can do." Take the rings. In one of her inside-outside designs, a flat silver band is layered over a tubular gold ring that peeks out at the wearer; in another, metals are layered—sometimes with rods or rings sandwiched between them—then stretched from the inside to form a unified, sculptural whole. In a further variation of this approach, she uses a thin, metal band to strap cylindrical, rough-cut colored stones to the basic ring form. While these designs are unmistakably "jewelry," Spitzer's "house" rings might be tiny maquettes for cubist sculpture. Inspired and delighted by the plethora of Hudson Valley barns she observed during her stay in Columbia County ("There's nothing like them in Germany"), she first sculpted their simplified forms in wax, sometimes clustering several barns on one ring, then cast them in black iron, silver, or gold. In their miniature monumentality, the iron rings in particular are among the show's most successful designs, as they evoke the kinds of forged tools, implements, and ritual objects associated with primitive art. They reveal Spitzer's shape-shifting talent for iconizing banal forms in surprising ways.

Spitzer effects another sort of transformation with bowls of silver and tomback—they are hammered eggshell thin, polished, then drilled and literally stitched with red silk pearl-stringing thread that traces the outline of Spitzer's own hands cupping the bowl. Though an intensely precious concept—one thinks of childhood embroideries done in hoops with thick wool yarn—the hand bowls inspire awe and disbelief, not only over the virtuosity of their construction, but also at the audaciousness of the design. The notion of drilling hundreds of tiny holes in bowls so lovingly formed is shocking in its destructiveness and, Spitzer admits, it "hurt my heart" to do it. But the thought of leaving her imprint on the bowls proved irresistible to the ever-morphing Spitzer, whose nimble mind evidently perceived sewing metal as simply a new way to draw.

Andrea DiNoto is a New York-based writer specializing in decorative arts and design.

clockwise from top left
Hands to Work, 2004
sterling silver, red silk pearl thread
4 1/4 x 4 3/4"

Wings Necklace, 2004
titanium
length 46"

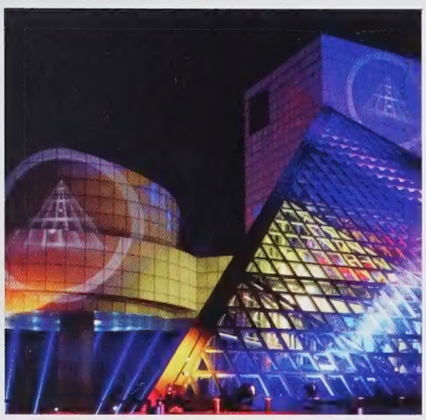
Home Rings, 2004
cast iron, oxidized silver, 18k gold

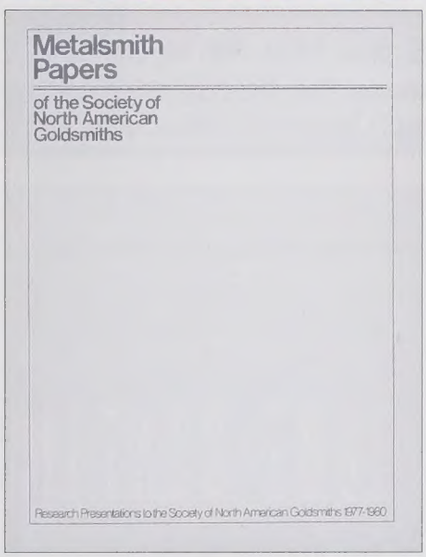
SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICAN GOLDSMITHS

The Organization for Jewelers, Designers and Metalsmiths

www.snagmetalsmith.org

by Dana Singer





top to bottom
Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum at night
Courtesy of Convention & Visitors Bureau of Greater Cleveland

Cover of SNAG's *Metalsmith Papers*, published in 1981

Members of SNAG's new business office staff, from left to right: Kate Lichter, Carol Kuc, Shefali Kubavat, Gail Judge, and Jerry Kuc

SNAG Awards 2004 Minority Outreach Grants to High Schools

SNAG awarded $10,000 in competitive grants to three high schools and the guest metal artists who will teach in their schools during the 2004-2005 school year. The schools and their corresponding artists are: Hoover High School, San Diego, CA, Lisa Slovis Mandel; Lathrop High School, Fairbanks, AK, Judie Gumm and Carol Wilbur; and Canutillo High School, Canutillo, TX, Helen Dorion. SNAG received a two-year matching grant from an anonymous foundation to support the program. SNAG secured its half of the matched amount in contributions from the New York Silver Society, the MJSA Educational Foundation, and individual members of SNAG. The jurors were Kristin Beeler, Daniella Kerner, and Nancy Worden.

New Technical Editor of SNAG News

Sean Gilson, of Gilson Designs, is the new technical editor of SNAG News. Gilson has a long background as a designer, maker, and business owner. The first article under his tutelage appeared in the February 2005 issue.

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum

As part of SNAG's upcoming conference in Cleveland, "Intersection," the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum is holding a juried exhibition, "The Influence of Rock and Roll," to run concurrently with the conference, and will provide the site for the final night dance party.

SNAG and Ganoksin Collaboration

SNAG's *Metalsmith Papers*, published in 1981 with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, will be archived on the Ganoksin Project website. The *Metalsmith Papers* are research presentations, given at SNAG Conferences between 1977 and 1981; they were compiled and published as a single volume. The historic papers range from safety issues and tools technology to practical procedures in metalsmithing.

SNAG Moves to New Location

SNAG recently consolidated its main business office together with all conference planning and management under one roof, moving to 1300 Iroquois Avenue, Suite #160, in Naperville, Illinois. SNAG Executive Director Dana Singer also moved to a new office at 457 Knoop Lane, Eugene, Oregon 97404. The website URL address remains the same: www.snagmetalsmith.org.

Dana Singer is the executive director of SNAG.

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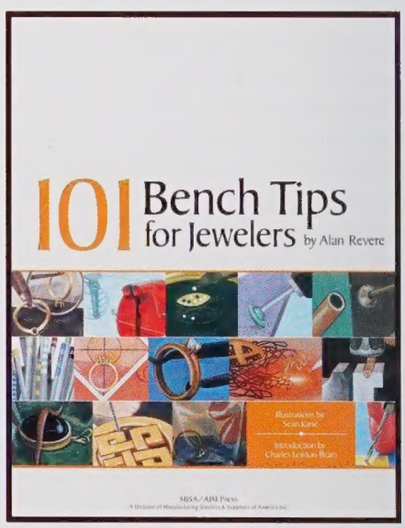
—From the Introduction by Charles Lewton-Brain



Alan Revere—acclaimed designer, author, and educator—now shares his most valuable bench tips and tricks in *101 Bench Tips for Jewelers*. Based on the monthly column in *AJM*, this book will help any jeweler speed production, improve quality, and raise profits at the bench. Filled with helpful, full-color illustrations, this publication offers tips for all aspects of bench work, from soldering to stone setting, piercing to final polish. *101 Bench Tips for Jewelers* is a resource you'll return to for many years to come.

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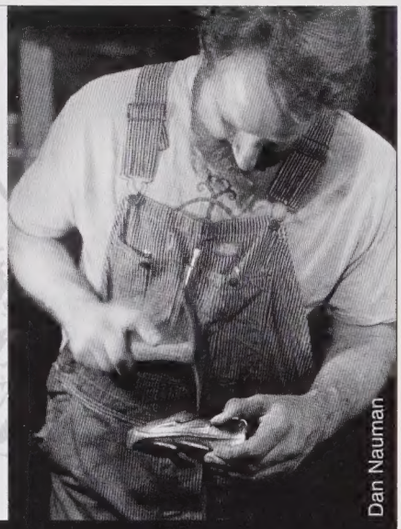
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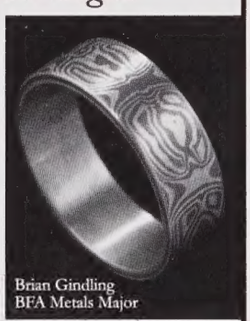
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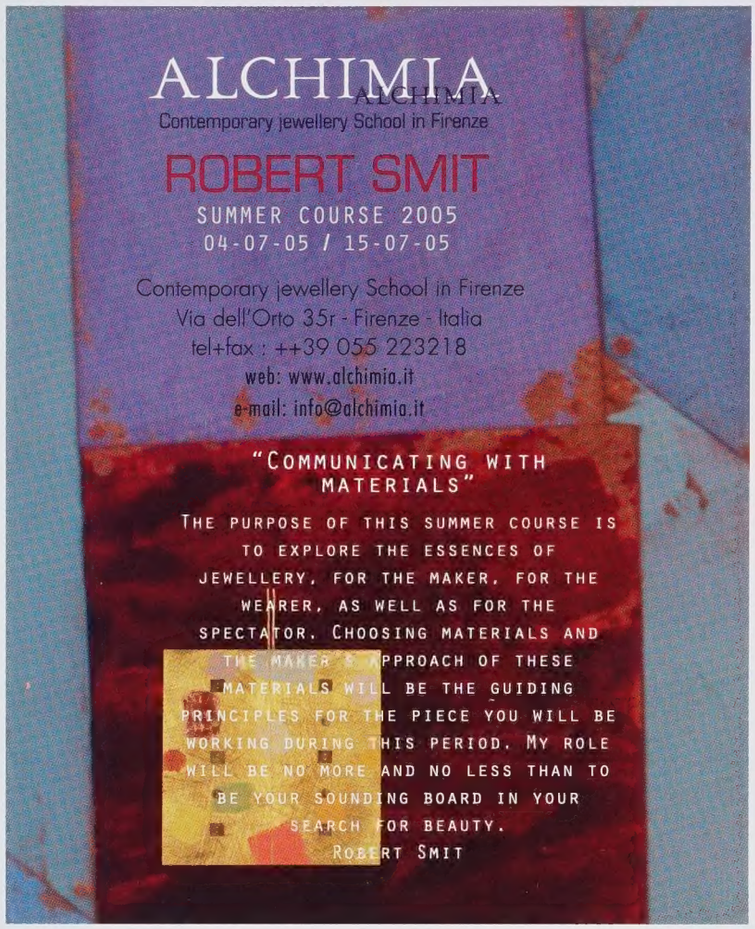
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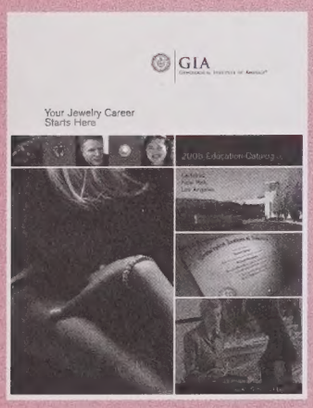

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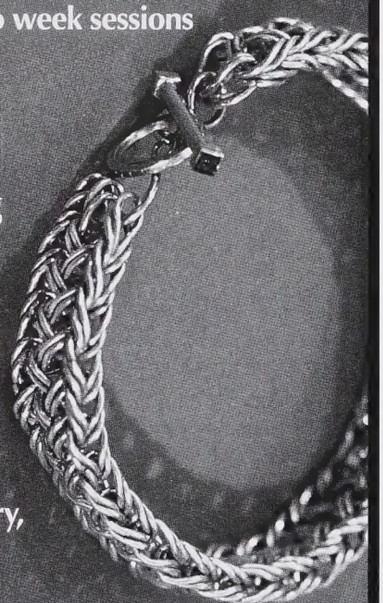

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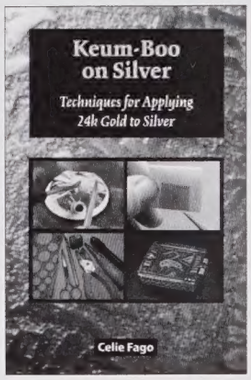

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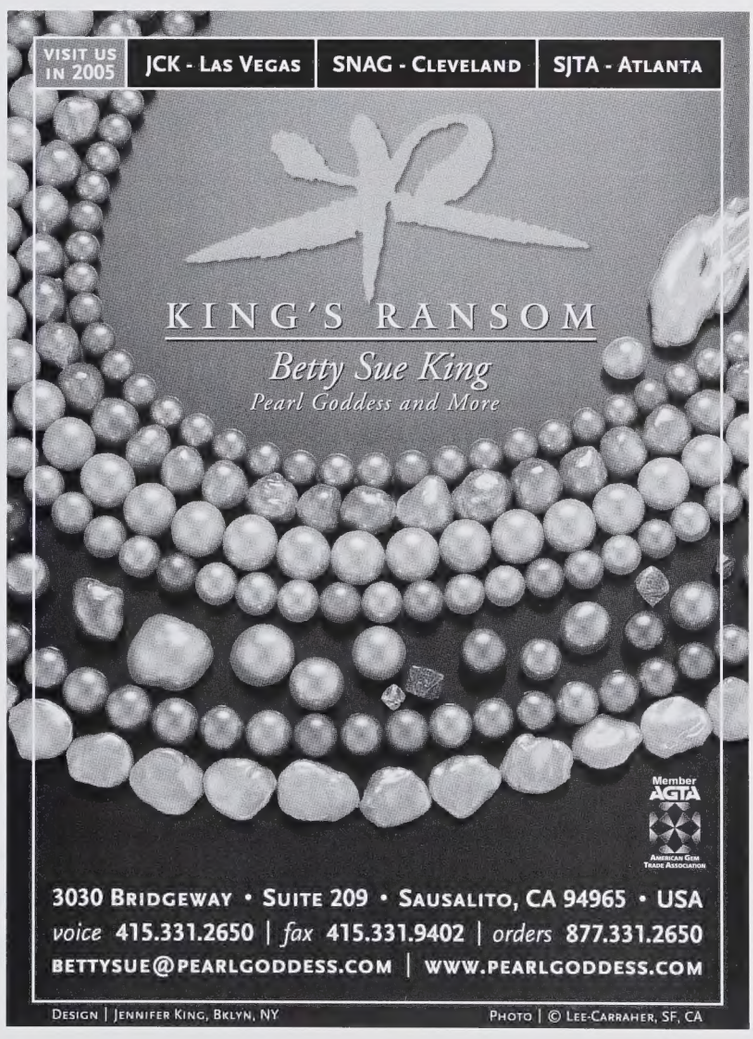
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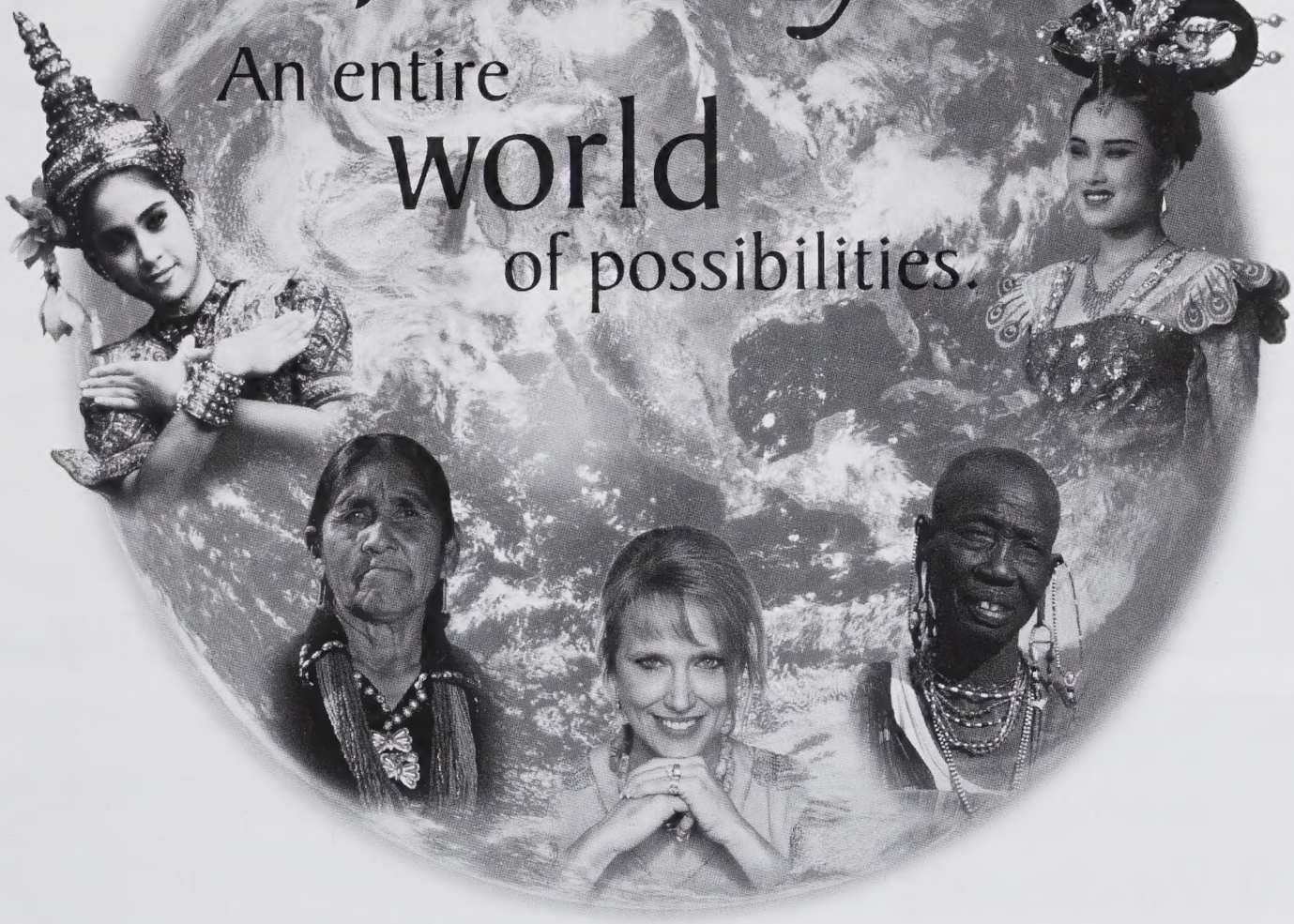

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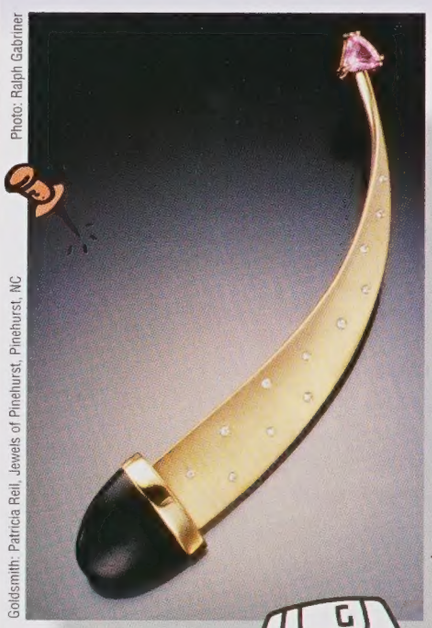

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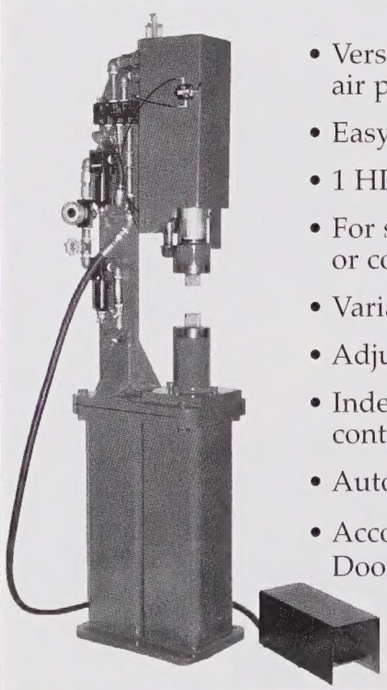

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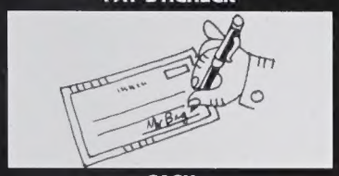

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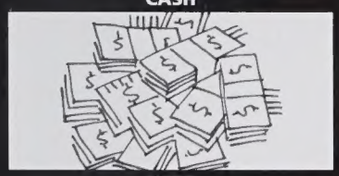

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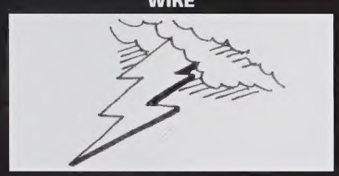

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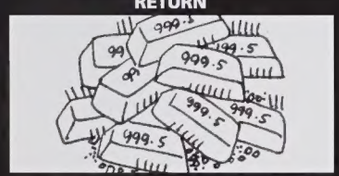

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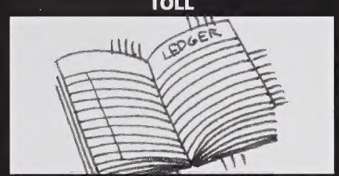

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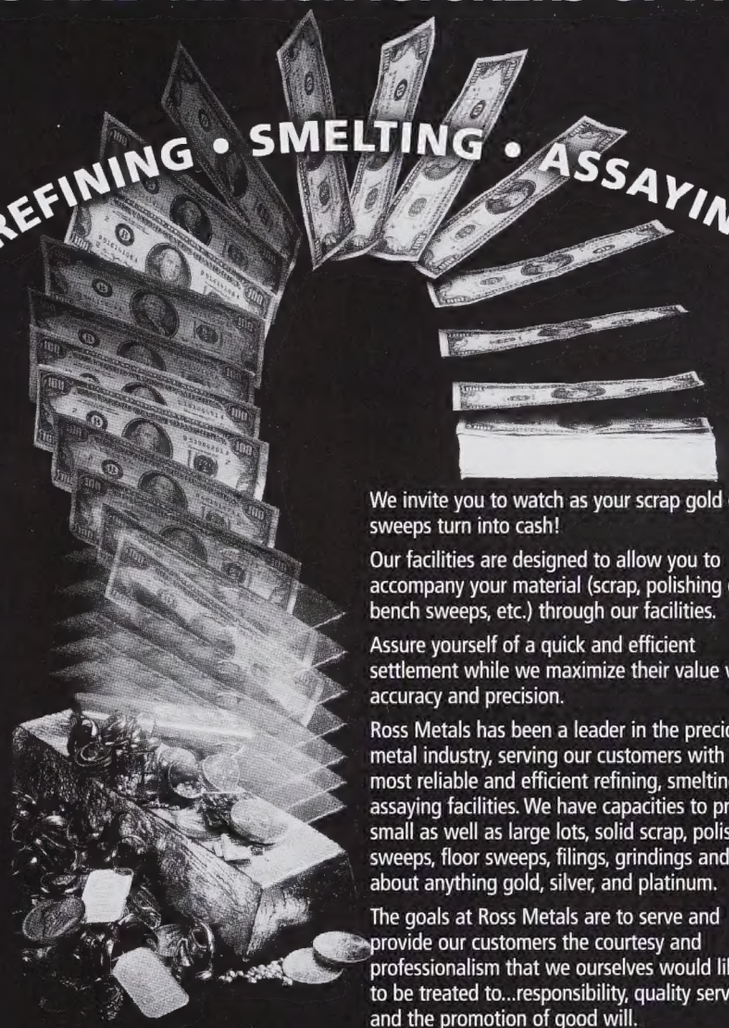

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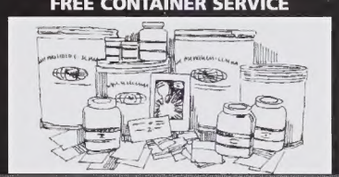

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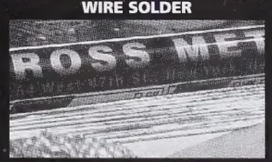

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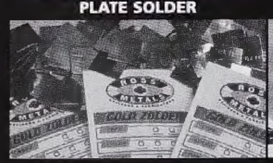

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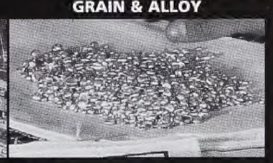

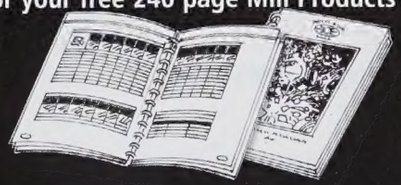

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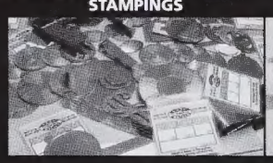

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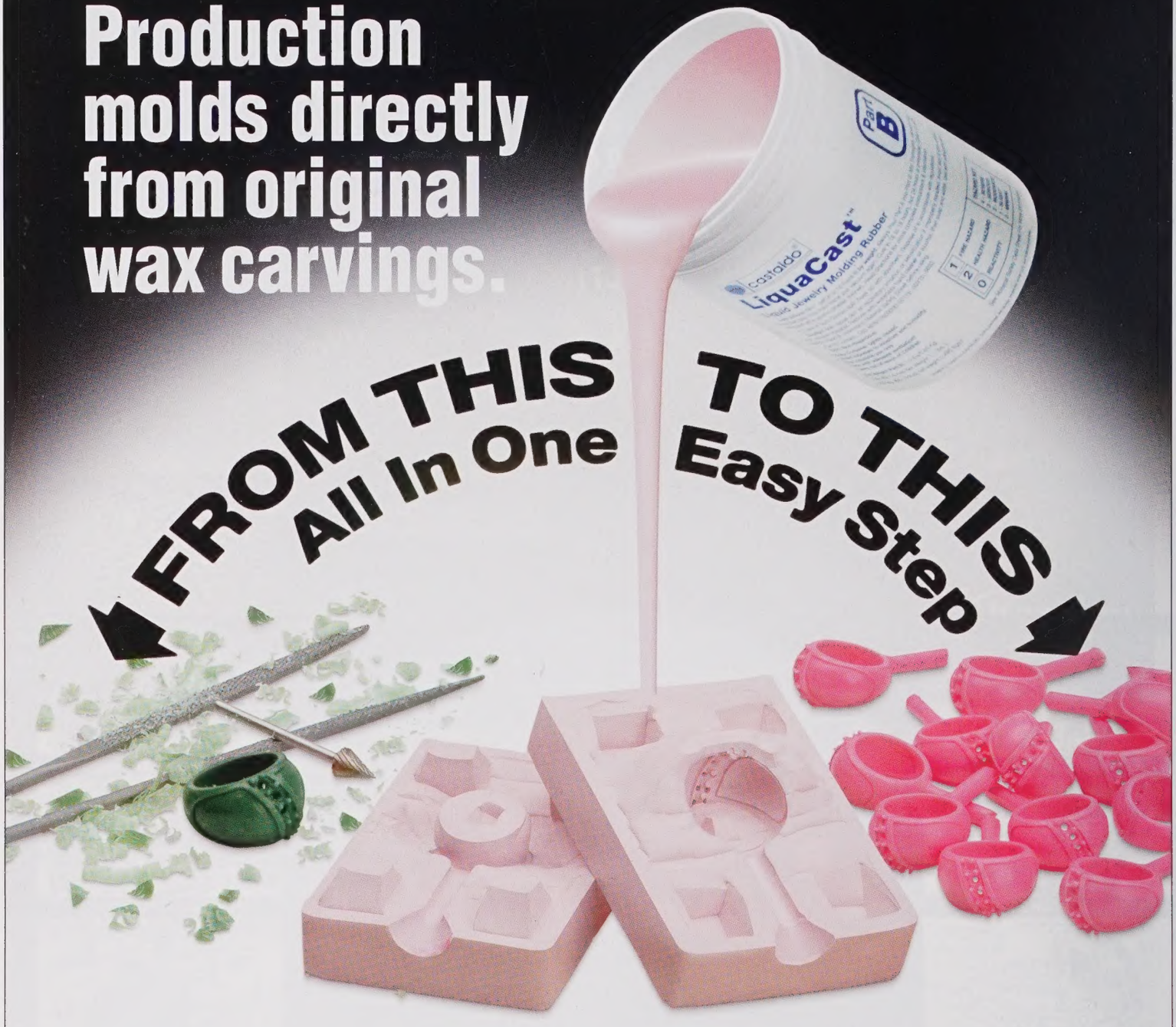

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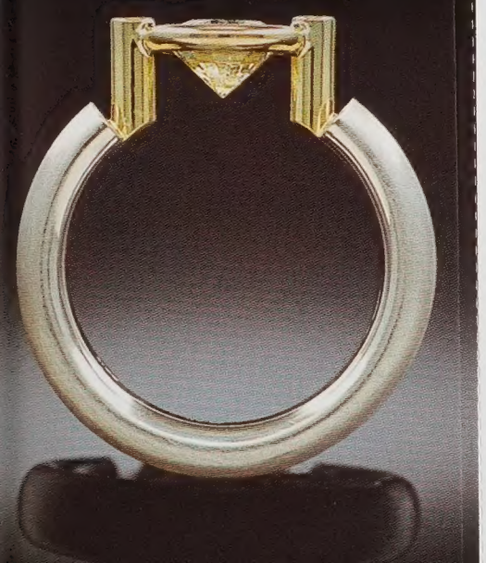

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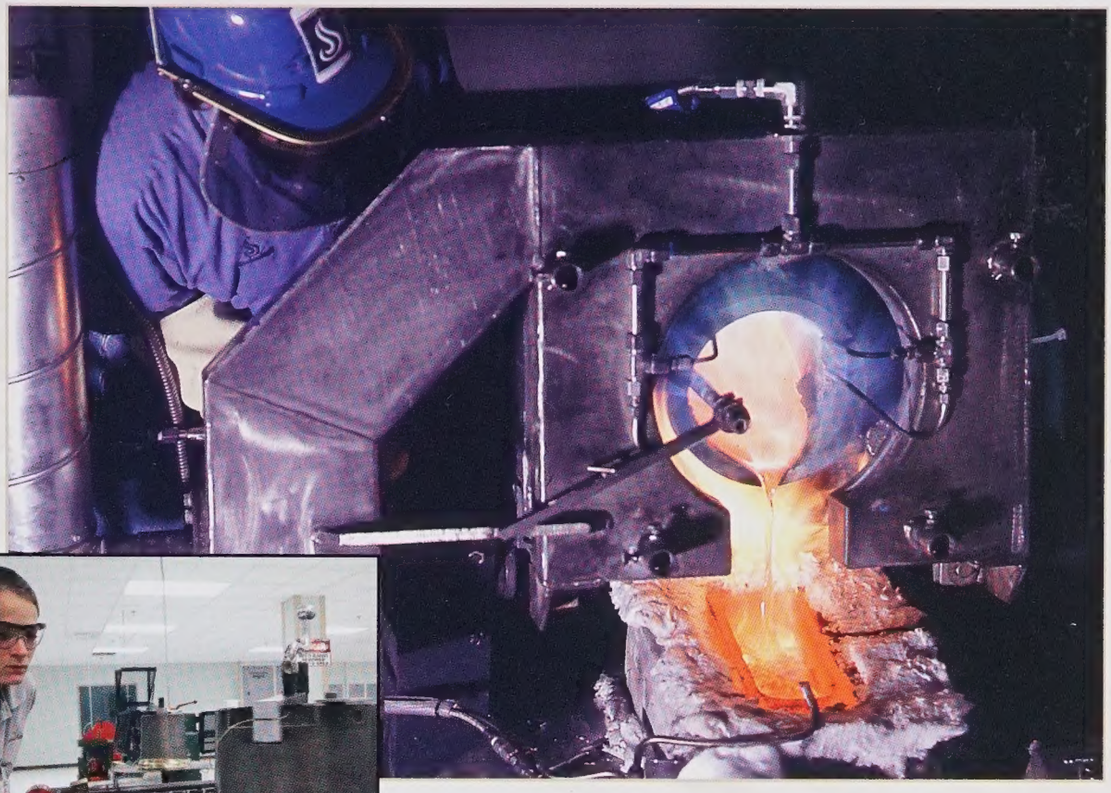
Ceremonial Pendant, 1998
copper, sterling, fine silver
4 3/4 x 1 1/4 x 1 1/2"
Photo: Ron Boszko

(Summer 2003 *Metalsmith*)
cover: Manfred Bischoff
Brothers (brooch), 2001
Courtesy Joseph Kosuth and
Cornelia Lauf, Rome

Helen Shirk
Sustaining Sprit XXVII, 2000
copper, patina, colored pencils
6 x 23 x 23"

Whitney Boin
Post Engagement Ring, 1996
produced since 1988
platinum, 18k
Photo: Todd Flashner



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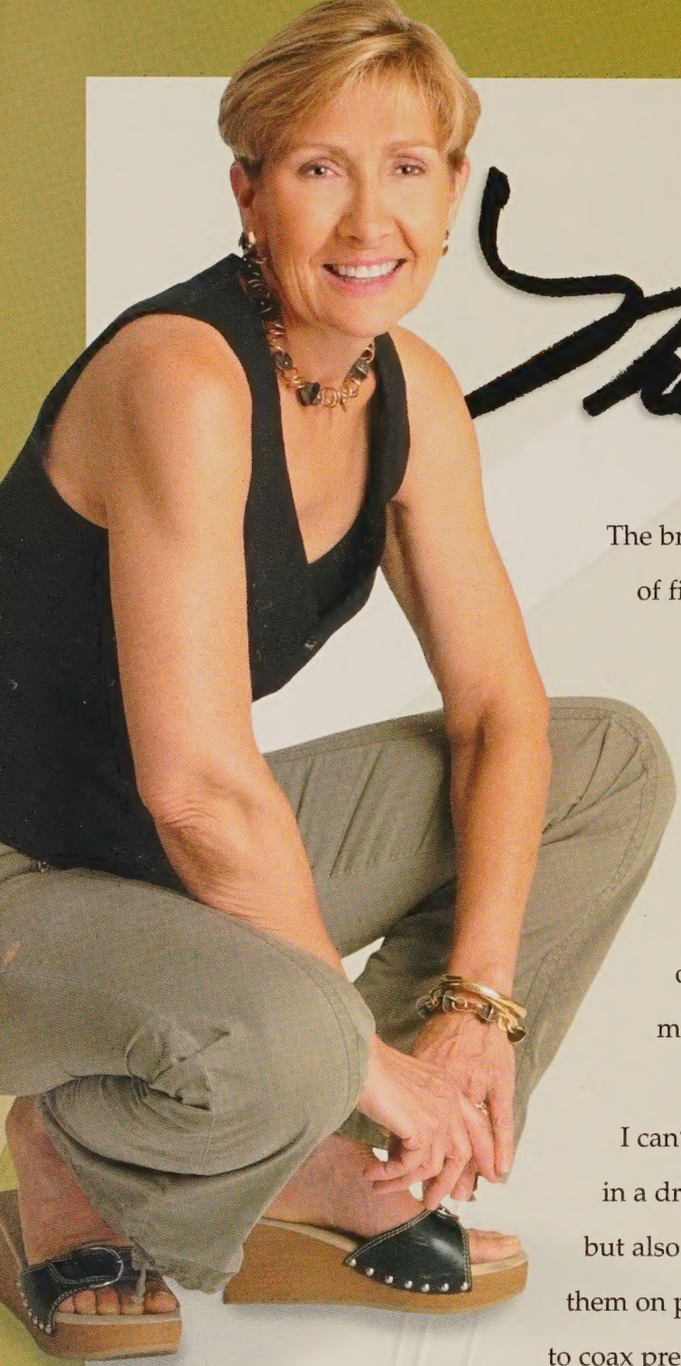

The Bailey

The breastbone of a goose wouldn't make most people think of fine jewelry, I know. But it's one of the exquisite forms that nature scatters all around us, a perfect example of the clean richness of line that never fails to move me.

From the time I could walk, my mother made such fun of hiking through the Michigan woods with my sisters and me, collecting berries, twigs, feathers—oh, just anything that caught our fancy. For me, it was nature's curves and textures that drew me first. Their elegant simplicity resonated deep within my body.

I can't say that I was always artistic or even creative. When I discovered, in a drawing class, that I could create not only the graceful line I loved but also depth and volume, I reveled in the power of my pencil to catch them on paper. And when I found that I could wield hammers and stakes to coax precious metal into delicate, three-dimensional curves—suggestive, say, of a goose's breastbone—I knew I had found my passion.

Marilyn Bailey
mother, metalsmith, activist
M.E. Bailey Designs
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Hendersonville, North Carolina

"Hollowform Bracelet"
First Place Winner, Silver
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